United Nations A/58/PV.46

General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

46th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 28 October 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Swe (Myanmar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 55, 57, 58 and 59 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/786, A/58/175, A/58/351, A/58/382 and A/58/395 and Corr.1)

Mr. Mekprayoonthong (Thailand): I should like to begin by joining previous speakers in expressing my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/58/351, which provides details of the status of implementation of actions described in last's year report (A/57/387) entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change", as well as for his other related reports. My delegation also commends the President of the Assembly for his determination to pursue this matter further as one of his top priorities for the current session. We keenly anticipate his pragmatic approach to making this session an action-oriented one. We attach great importance to the strengthening of the United Nations system and pledge our continued support for the initiatives put forward by the Secretary-General to bring about further improvements in the United Nations. As the sole universal multilateral institution, the United Nations needs to evolve with the times and changing geopolitical landscape and demonstrate renewed vigour in order to remain effective and relevant.

The exercise of strengthening the United Nations system encompasses restructuring, reform, the revitalization of its main bodies and organs and the modernization of the Secretariat. We believe that the rationalization of the work of the General Assembly is at the heart of this exercise. It may be recalled that, at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, heads of State or Government resolved to reaffirm the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, and to enable it to play that role effectively. During the general debate this year, we also heard an overwhelming number of delegations underlining the importance and urgency of the issue of the revitalization of the General Assembly. In this regard, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made yesterday by Morocco and Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively. We would also like to add a few words of our own as our initial input to the process of United Nations reform. In doing so, we wish to refer to the useful note prepared by the President of the General Assembly and the Secretariat for last

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week's informal consultations on this issue as the departure point for our discussion.

Thailand supports the framework of action, as proposed by the President, to consider the revitalization issue under two clusters: enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly; and improving the working methods of the General Assembly. Under the cluster relating to the authority and role of the General Assembly, my delegation fully endorses the proposals in paragraph 11 of the President's note, especially those relating to the enhancement of the General Assembly so that it can fulfil its role as envisaged in the Charter, as well as of the role of the President and the capacity of his Office. Under the cluster dealing with the working methods of the General Assembly, Thailand can go along with all proposals listed in paragraph 12, which will help to streamline the work of the General Assembly and lighten the workload of the Secretariat and Member States.

My delegation also supports the proposal to reprogramme consideration of agenda items in plenary meeting in the General Assembly and in the Main Committees over the full year of a session rather than trying to do most of the work during the last quarter of the year. The idea of thematic discussion on issues that are a pressing priority during the general debate also merits further consideration.

Success in revitalizing the work of the General Assembly hinges on a number of factors. Of paramount importance is the political will of Member States to empower the General Assembly to play the role envisaged and mandated by the Charter. In order for proposals for change to enjoy broad support and achieve consensus, discussions should be conducted openly and with transparency in an atmosphere of trust and constructive criticism. Once decisions have been reached, it is equally important to ensure that they are fully implemented. The General Assembly must find ways to ensure that its resolutions are taken seriously and implemented in national, as well as international, contexts. The 36 actions outlined by the Secretary-General in the report (A/57/387) submitted during the previous session should continue to serve as a road map guiding our deliberations, and will be useful in setting clear benchmarks for all actions requiring implementation.

Reform is certainly not an indefinite process. We must aim to deal with this daunting challenge within a specific time frame. The reform of the United Nations must be carried out in such a way as to enable the United Nations to attain the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, as intended. While there certainly is a prevailing sense of urgency with regard to the need to revitalize the General Assembly and to reform the United Nations, the momentum needs to be sustained if we are to reach the targets that we have set. My delegation remains steadfast in its support for a more effective and relevant General Assembly and United Nations. We also support the Secretary-General's initiative to set up a panel of eminent personalities and stand ready to provide further inputs and to play our part to achieve that end.

Mr. De Santa Clara Gomes (Portugal): I fully subscribe to the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union. It covers all the main points raised by the President of the Assembly in his non-paper, and by other delegations in the informal consultations. I think that our suggestions should be the object of a constructive dialogue with a view to strengthening the United Nations system.

I would like to touch on just two points. The revitalization of the General Assembly is of immense political importance and is fundamental for the development of strategies aimed at achieving the goals set by the Charter.

The Assembly is the cornerstone of the Organization. It is not always fully realized that it is the main source of the legitimacy of the United Nations. This role is more than symbolic; continued neglect of this body is damaging to the whole United Nations system. The European Union points out several priorities in this matter that we must explore.

But there is one point I would stress here: the need for our debates to be more interactive. Several things can and should be done, but let me add a simple and rather minor one: let us hold most of our debates in another room. Last year when, as Vice-President, I was called on to chair meetings, I had the sensation — which you may feel now — that this room looks more than half empty and is too big to encourage true dialogue. Why not meet regularly in another room, when we do not expect large audiences?

Another point mentioned in the statement of the European Union is the need to address the issue of the Economic and Social Council's interaction with the Security Council, for example on post-conflict issues.

This touches on the way both bodies could work better and — more than that — how they could respond to a fundamental goal of the international system: conflict prevention. At present not much is done, even in the case of countries with respect to which we all feel that the complexity of the social situation, the insufficiencies of the State and the economic failure should be recognized and addressed together. It is particularly striking in the case of countries in post-conflict situations where a peacekeeping operation is phased out and the country, sometimes still very vulnerable, is left alone.

We consider that in those pre- and post-conflict situations there are three needs that the international community must address: reinforcing the internal security system; building up national institutions and making the State stronger and more capable of doing its job; and, finally, creating a viable economy.

The Security Council, hard pressed with the urgent and pressing needs of a large agenda, has not, in our view, been paying sufficient attention to all those needs. And it lacks, if I may say so, the competence or the interest in these situations to add economic assistance to State-building and security needs. The Economic and Social Council has greater sensitivity to certain aspects of such problems but is not equipped to work in conflict prevention with full effectiveness.

That is why the Portuguese Prime Minister, in his intervention in the General Assembly debate, proposed the creation of a new institutional mechanism, a new commission with a mandate to routinely monitor cases of conflict prevention and promote conditions for peace and development. In conjunction with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, which would both preserve their respective areas of competence, and under a mandate given by them, the commission could identify and deal with the most pressing needs. It would also draw up, for countries at risk — and that is the case in most post-conflict situations and in other clearly defined situations — integrated strategies allying the objectives of security, reinforcement of institutions, namely in the justice and administration sectors, and economic and social development. To create conditions for development, obviously, the commission would need to be closely linked with the Bretton Woods institutions and United Nations agencies.

International and donor aid will be more forthcoming if an integrated strategy is adopted with this kind of support. In terms of the United Nations budget, we think existing resources should be sufficient to cover the functioning of such a commission.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia would like to express its appreciation to the President for convening this timely joint debate, which provides an opportunity to discuss the subject of the revitalization of the General Assembly in the context of the larger question of the reform of the United Nations. In our view, the opportunity provided by the joint debate enables us to focus on the comprehensive nature of the issue.

In our view, reform of the United Nations is justified by the fact that it is the world's premier instrument for multilateral diplomacy. The strengthening of the United Nations would, in turn, strengthen the practice of multilateralism.

In this connection, my delegation associates itself with the statement made earlier by Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on the subject of the revitalization of the General Assembly. My delegation supports the need to re-establish the role of the General Assembly as this Organization's chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ and to ensure that its resolutions are fully implemented.

In the effort to strengthen the United Nations system, we are particularly pleased that revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is a primary focus of the fifty-eighth session of the Assembly. In that regard, we find great reassurance in the President's expression of his readiness to take the lead in implementing those proposals of the Assembly that can be advanced at this time and to help develop further proposals leading to further revitalization of the Assembly. We are encouraged by his efforts and the non-paper that he has circulated, for which we are very grateful.

Similarly, my delegation would also like to acknowledge the recommendations contained in the note by the former President of the General Assembly on the revitalization of the General Assembly (A/57/861). We support those recommendations, in particular, the need for the President of the General Assembly to meet more frequently with the Chairpersons of the Main Committees, as well as other relevant groups, on matters involving procedure. We

further support the recommendation for the Chairpersons to bring to the attention of the President proposals for further enhancing the effectiveness of the Main Committees. Taken along with other measures contained in existing resolutions designed to rationalize the agenda of the General Assembly, the recommendations in this note will certainly help to improve the work and workload of the Assembly.

With regard to specifics relating to methods of work, we share the view that the reallocation of agenda items that span a number of Main Committees is best handled in the plenary. The Main Committees should continue to develop ways of improving their own methods of work and to share that information with other committees that might be interested.

We welcome the advances that have been made in the technical areas of reform, such as I have just outlined, which concern such issues as overlapping, enhancing coordination and strengthening efficiency. At the same time, we must urge greater commitment towards progress in the strategic areas, which affects the capability of the United Nations system to uphold the objectives and principles stipulated in the Charter.

In that connection, I would also like to reaffirm how important it is for the reform of the Security Council to be undertaken without further delay. As we have stated in the past, that critically important body, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, must be enlarged and restructured so that it can enjoy the support and confidence of the international community. As it is currently constituted, the Security Council merely reflects the world of 50 years ago. Despite every political advance since then, the Council lacks equitable representation, and the voices of vast populations around the world are still not being sufficiently heard. We further believe that reform in this body is also required in order to bolster the legitimacy of its decision-making process.

Permit me now to make similar comments about the Economic and Social Council, which should continue to strengthen its role as the mechanism for system-wide coordination. My delegation was pleased with the Council in its 2003 coordination segment, the topic of which was the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. In this regard, the Economic and Social Council decided to establish a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment of its substantive session, based on a focused and balanced list of cross-sectoral thematic issues common to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

Similarly, we feel that a cross-sectoral approach should be used by the Council to review the implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits and their follow-up processes and to assess its impact on the achievement of their goals and targets. In dealing with cross-sectoral thematic issues, the Council should invite functional commissions and other relevant follow-up mechanisms that can contribute proposals and responses from their specific perspectives. Regional commissions would help address the regional dimension of cross-cutting goals and targets. The Council should also encourage greater coordination among relevant organizations of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization.

At the end of the day, reform must be seen in terms of how well it is helping the cause of development in the Third World, because the exercise is not reform for the sake of reform, but to achieve the objectives of development. In that connection, we share the view of the Non-Aligned Movement that it is worrisome that the impact of the reform process in the Organization is yet to be felt in the developing world. It is essential that the success of United Nations reform be judged in terms not only of the improvements in the way that the Organization functions, but also of how much more the developing countries can participate in its work and of the development benefits that they are enjoying as a result.

Let us bear in mind that the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the recent global conferences provide us with a compass by which we can guide development. In his report on an agenda for further change, the Secretary-General made a case for a more focused programme of work. He also noted that the nature and pace of reform implementation will depend on progress in a number of intergovernmental forums, the most significant of which is the General Assembly. The importance of the revitalization of this Assembly in taking development forward, therefore, is very clear.

In that light, while my delegation supports the Secretary-General's proposal for improving the current planning and budgeting cycle, we would like to emphasize that this process should not compromise the ability of the Organization to carry out programmes mandated by the Member States, in particular in the area of international cooperation on development. In this regard, it is the belief of my delegation that the reform process should not be considered as a budget cut.

Permit me now to recall the statement of the Secretary-General at the opening of the fifty-eighth session, in which he indicated his intention to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities charged with examining the current challenges to peace and security; considering the contribution which collective action can make in addressing these challenges; reviewing the functioning of the major organs of the United Nations and the relationship between them; and recommending ways of strengthening the United Nations through reform of its institutions and processes.

While we fully support this initiative, we hope that the Panel will act as a catalyst for all of the reform and revitalization efforts of the United Nations. We firmly believe that the Panel will be comprised of competent, experienced personnel with appropriate backgrounds in management and the full commitment to multilateralism that is necessary to undertake an important task of this nature. My delegation eagerly looks forward to the Panel's recommendations, which the Secretary-General expects to make available to this Assembly at the next session.

In conclusion, we must find the political will to review each and every aspect of the functioning of the main bodies of the United Nations and we must be swift in realigning and repositioning them. The United Nations of 2003 bears almost no relationship to the one that was set up over 50 years ago. Unless its growth in membership and its shifting challenges are reflected in the structures and mechanisms we put in place to address them, we cannot fully fulfil the mandates of the Charter.

Mr. Mubarez (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Sir, for your tireless efforts to advance practical steps towards the revitalization of the General Assembly that will allow it to recover its essential role as a deliberative and decision-making organ of the United Nations. In your leadership of the General Committee, you have contributed to anchoring our work.

However, there is growing awareness of the need to exploit this heightened activity and momentum in order to achieve the objectives of reform. The Secretary-General has called for a radical reform of the Organization and all its agencies to enhance their effectiveness and openness. We are unanimous in our endorsement of these goals and would be shirking our responsibilities if we failed to seize this opportunity. It is very encouraging to note the stated commitments of the participants in this debate to United Nations reform.

The Secretary-General's efforts demonstrate that we are on the right path. We believe that it is very important for United Nations reform to be exhaustive and integrated if it is to strengthen the collective work of the entire system. It is quite clear that revitalization of the General Assembly is an integral part of such reform, since the Assembly's membership includes all Member States on an equal footing.

Today more than ever, we need international consensus to address the various challenges confronting us. Nevertheless, in the course of recent years the General Assembly has been extremely imbalanced, as evidenced by the major gap between the importance of the issues it considers and its manifest failure to resolve them — which, of course, damages its credibility and the effectiveness of its role. While many resolutions have been adopted on this topic, most of them — as noted in the statement issued by the Non-Aligned Movement — relate to the rationalization of the agenda and the improvement of its working methods rather than to the more fundamental issues.

I support the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77, and I thank the Group for its proposals of 17 November confirming its views on revitalization of the General Assembly. General Assembly resolution 55/285 provides, in paragraph 1, that

> "The process of revitalizing the General Assembly and improving its efficiency focuses on the implementation of existing Assembly resolutions and decisions ... Improvement of the procedures and working methods of the Assembly is only a first step towards more substantive improvements in and revitalization of the Assembly. The goal of this ongoing process is to

enable the Assembly to play its role effectively as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations."

Reform should enable the Assembly to take decisions on the most urgent issues on its agenda and a major commitment must be made to implementing its resolutions and decisions. Decision-making in the General Assembly, which is based on unanimity in most cases, is a real example of democracy in international action, since these decisions are taken by a majority of those voting. This should encourage us to choose the democratic option, given the failure of the Security Council as a result of the irresponsible use of the veto, to comply faithfully with the resolutions of the General Assembly.

We would like to concentrate on the most significant issues relating to reform. We see that the Security Council is going well beyond its powers and has thus jeopardized the authority of the General Assembly. For this reason we believe we must be more careful to divide the responsibilities of the two bodies. The agenda of the General Assembly, as the Secretary-General has noted, is overburdened. There are many items which are of interest to only a handful of countries that are addressed at the expense of items which are, in our opinion, much more important. The matters which should be given priority should be chosen from those agenda items which appear on the agenda of the General Assembly. Thirdly, we fully agree with strengthening the General Committee of the General Assembly so it can properly follow up the implementation of resolutions on the revitalization of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that the reform process of the United Nations and its agencies and organs can only be successful if other reforms are made in tandem with improving the quality of management of the Organization as a whole. Despite the commendable efforts of the Secretary-General in this matter, we do not notice any major change in the situation, in particular in the use of human resources and recruitment policies. Very little has been implemented to take advantage of the skills available in developing countries for work at the Secretariat and its agencies. It would appear that transparency, geographical balance and universality is failing in the case of those managing the work of the Organization.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): My delegation is particularly pleased to be participating in this important discussion, which is fundamental to our work here at the United Nations. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the ongoing efforts aimed at revitalizing the Organization and its specialized agencies, and concurs with the Secretary-General's comments on the urgent need for the United Nations to determine in which direction it is to go in order to maximize its benefit to the peoples of the world.

My delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the President of the Assembly for the proposals before us dealing with enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly and with improving the work methods of the Assembly. The Bahamas delegation supports the need for improving the capacity of the General Assembly to fulfil its role as envisaged under the United Nations Charter and the need for enhanced cooperation and more effective relationships between the General Assembly and the principal organs of this Organization. This is critical for the overall harmonization and coherence in the implementation of decisions taken by the General Assembly.

Although we would agree that the general debate provides an opportunity for Member States to espouse their national positions on matters of mutual concern to the General Assembly, the proposal that the level of representation in the annual general debate, and special meetings of the General Assembly should be at the highest political level, may pose a difficulty to many developing countries which are already hard pressed to provide adequate representation to cover the ongoing work of the Main Committees. Developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, now make the decision to follow only those items which are of the greatest importance to them, as the plethora of agenda items makes it almost impossible to be represented in all of the Main Committees.

In an effort to alleviate this situation, perhaps it is necessary to expand the time allotted for the work of the General Assembly and allow for work within the Main Committees to be distributed over a longer period rather than the current three months, from September to December, as has already been proposed by a number of delegations. Also in this regard, the Bahamas delegation would support the further clustering of related items to decrease the time allocated to

individual items in the plenary and Main Committees. We wish, however, to caution that this merging of items into clusters should in no way diminish or jeopardize the importance of development issues as they pertain to the economic and social well-being of developing countries.

My delegation wishes to propose that the role of the Department of Public Information be enhanced to assist in promoting the work of the United Nations, not only within the Organization but even more importantly, in ensuring that the message of the United Nations is effectively disseminated to the peoples of the world.

In this age of information technology, every effort should be made to assist developing countries to access information and communications technology which would allow them to become active participants in relevant discussions now, as opposed to later, when the hard copy arrives. This would strengthen our efforts to have decisions made in a timely manner and could lead to further effectiveness and efficiency within the Organization.

The time has come for a review of all matters on the agenda of the General Assembly to determine their relevance within the context of the existing geopolitical global economy. This may result in biennial consideration of some items while others in their present form could be removed entirely from the agenda. This pragmatic approach demands that a serious and exhaustive evaluation be undertaken of the current situation with regard to the agenda items. This evaluation should, in turn, lead directly to a more efficient Organization with clear goals and objectives aimed at realizing the promises and ideals delineated in the Charter and in subsequent declarations, such as those issuing from the Millennium Summit. My delegation recognizes that this is a difficult process; however, it is one that, with the requisite political will, can achieve the desired goal.

The Bahamas is committed to ensuring that the integrity of the United Nations is preserved and respected. We are committed to the purposes and principles of this Organization. We therefore, want to ensure that the United Nations continues in its quest to make the Organization the place where efforts are made each day to improve the quality of life for each of the world's citizens.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): We consider the reform of the United Nations system in general and the revitalization of the General Assembly in particular as an utmost priority and indeed a necessity to give this Organization its rightful place and function. It has been said many times, and never better than by the Secretary-General, who recognized the need for reform a long time ago. He declared that we have reached a fork in the road, and radical reform is therefore a must.

The Secretariat depends on our continued support, but, more importantly, we, as Member States, must claim ownership of this Organization, not merely by insisting on the rights assured us under the Charter, but by assuming responsibility for its future and showing willingness to compromise on our national interests. More and more people turn to the United Nations with high hopes and expectations, then only too often to turn away in bewildered frustration.

We thus welcome this debate and commend the President in particular for submitting a non-paper, which has enjoyed a very positive reception at the informal meetings conducted on 17 October. Time is indeed of the essence, and the early convening of informal meetings on this issue has created a very positive dynamic, which we hope will soon yield concrete results. I wish to assure him that my delegation will give its full support to his endeavours. Following his wish expressed at the end of those informal meetings, I will make concrete points regarding the issues before us.

We were pleased to see that the proposal to strengthen the Office of the President is finding strong support. A concrete measure should be the secondment of competent Secretariat personnel to the Office of the President, which can bring the value of institutional memory to the Office and also the possibility of re-election of the President. Reform is a protracted process, and two years still seem a very limited time in which to make a concrete difference.

Enhancing the role of the General Committee is in fact very closely linked to the strengthening of the Office of the General Assembly President, and it is in our view entirely up to the President to give the Committee a meaningful role. We are just happy to see that you have already initiated concrete changes in this respect. The General Committee should live up to its responsibility regarding the agenda of the General Assembly, not only regarding the question of inclusion

of new items, but also in dealing with the agenda as a whole.

With regard to the agenda, the overarching goal must be to make it more relevant, more accessible and a better reflection of the challenges the United Nations is facing today. Ranking highest among these challenges are the Millennium Development Goals. Quite a number of agenda items could simply be deleted, as we all know. It would only require the political will of Member States. A case in point might even be our debate today: do we really need four agenda items on what comes together into one debate on reform?

What is even more important than the length of the agenda, however, is the frequency with which we consider the items that are on it. There are, in fact, few items that merit consideration every single year. For a lot of them, consideration should take place every two — or sometimes even every three or five — years. This would not only alleviate the burden that is currently placed on all of us, but would also leave more time and room for implementation and thus make consideration more meaningful. It would of course also have an immediate effect on the issue of documentation, one of the biggest practical problems today. Again, the General Committee should act as a real bureau and support the presidency in this respect.

The topic of the Main Committees is a particularly vast one, and we hope it will be discussed in quite some detail. We thus only wish to point out the main areas in which we believe consideration and action are needed. The General Assembly has in the past successfully reduced the number of Main Committees from seven to six. It might want to have another look to see if all of these are needed or whether the agendas of some could not be integrated into those of other bodies, including, of course, the plenary.

As an alternative to or in combination with a reduction in the number of Main Committees, the General Assembly could decide that they should meet throughout the year in a sequenced order. The current practice seems to be carried over from the times — long gone — when it was possible to do all the General Assembly work from September to December, and is thus obsolete.

Carrying out reform and monitoring its success can only be achieved if there is real interaction between the Office of the President and the Chairs of the Main Committees. I was gratified to hear that the President has changed the format of the regular meetings of the President with the Chairs, which I suggested to your predecessor when I chaired the Third Committee last year.

The best measure to reduce resolutions is the biennialization or triennialization of a particular item. But even if an item is up for consideration, it should not be automatically assumed that a resolution should be the necessary result. In particular, when the text of the resolution would be pretty much identical to that of previous years, a decision reaffirming the earlier resolution would in fact have the same effect and negotiations could then concentrate on whether or not a report was needed and when the item should be considered next.

All these comments are related to the working methods of the General Assembly. Measures taken in this area must, in our view, have one clear goal: enhancing the role of the Assembly, as called for most prominently in the Millennium Declaration and as contained in the other cluster of your non-paper.

We believe that there should be a real dialogue between the Security Council and the General Assembly. This requires changes in the working methods of the General Assembly in particular and also the possibility of meeting in a more informal way. Furthermore, there is no reason in our mind that the Security Council submit only one annual report to the General Assembly; it could be quite meaningful to have several such reports whenever a particular situation makes this necessary.

We would like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for the presentation of the report. We welcome the ongoing reform process and wish to emphasize only two points at this juncture.

First, we welcome the recommendations to streamline the planning and budgeting process in order to make it less time-consuming. We hope that the Organization will be able to achieve a closer link between political priorities and budgetary planning. We welcome the presentation made by the Secretary-General this morning in that respect. Second, we also welcome the strong emphasis the report places on the area of human rights, a priority area of United Nations work that remains seriously underfunded. We will continue to pay special attention to the issue of treaty body reform, on which we organized, together with the

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, an expert meeting earlier this year.

Mr. van den Berg (Netherlands): The message of our political leaders during the general debate was extremely clear: there is a political will to reform and strengthen the United Nations. A window of opportunity for badly needed change presents itself now more than ever before and it is now our responsibility, as our political leaders' representatives, to act.

I will focus my brief remarks on the General Assembly, first of all because the Netherlands mission was actively involved in the so-called Greentree retreat earlier this year and secondly because I believe that decisive steps to improve the Assembly's functioning stand a good chance of succeeding at this session.

In brief, we are in dire need of concrete proposals to produce a more relevant and more elegant functioning of the General Assembly. To a large extent, this boils down to rethinking our way of conducting business in New York. The high-level panel will look into that, but will probably not provide us with solutions ready for adoption with regard to the workings of the General Assembly. It rests upon us, the stewards of the General Assembly, to achieve revitalization of the General Assembly.

Italy, on behalf of the European Union, has already submitted ideas to which the Netherlands fully subscribes. Let me add a few thoughts, focusing first on the agenda of the General Assembly and secondly on the role and impact of resolutions.

We suggest that the agenda of the Assembly be regrouped around major issues of global import. We think that that would make the agenda more coherent, more accessible and more manageable for Member States. It would greatly help all delegations, small and large, to better apprehend the work of the General Assembly and would also help the general public to gain a better understanding of what is going on in the Assembly.

In our view, the eight sections of the Millennium Declaration could provide an ideal framework for such an exercise. Those sections represent, by and large, the key concerns in today's world, as recognized by our heads of State just three years ago. We shall share with all Missions, as food for thought, an informal and indicative note — a non-paper that explores what the results of such an exercise could be. In that context, we should like to make a number of observations.

The current agenda of the General Assembly does not completely cover the Millennium Declaration and its goals. Just one telling example: no agenda item covers the first section of the Millennium Declaration, entitled "Values and principles", although that section addresses fundamental issues.

The distribution of agenda items between plenary meetings and the Main Committees seems to be to the detriment of discussion of highly relevant topics in plenary meetings. For example, in our view, items such as the fight against terrorism, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, peacekeeping and the implementation of the outcomes of major conferences deserve to be considered at the plenary level. That would immediately give plenary meetings a more prominent role and profile.

Quite often, agenda items have a "micro" focus on a particular subject or country. That is especially the case in plenary meetings. We could consider addressing the broader issues that they address by organizing our debate around themes of broader interest, rather than on specific agenda items. In doing so, of course, we should not lose sight of specific issues of concern to some Member States.

The distribution of work among the Main Committees indicates that, in some instances, there is still too much overlapping and lack of clarity in the division of responsibilities.

My second group of comments concerns resolutions. The Assembly produces 300 resolutions per year. Indeed, very few are read by our masters at home, let alone by the wider public. Even we tend to forget about them, once they have been adopted. Their sheer number has reduced their relevance as the expression of the will of the international community. On this issue, the Netherlands is pleased to share with Member States another non-paper containing food for thought; it focuses on how to better control the number of resolutions and how to shift our debate to their follow-up and implementation. I shall highlight two of its slightly more ambitious suggestions.

Since there is a clear correlation between the number of agenda items and the number of resolutions, consideration could be given to the suggestion, contained in the Greentree report, to consider the

longer-term agenda of the General Assembly as a comprehensive list of agenda items. Each session of the Assembly could draw upon that list in compiling its yearly programme of work. The General Committee could advise the Assembly in deciding on its programme of work.

Another new approach could be to agree on a review cycle as part of adopting a resolution. That would avoid bringing the resolution to the vote again the following year, since the subsequent year would focus on review. Only if new developments or fresh insights justified substantial change would the review lead to the adoption of a substantially changed or new resolution on the item under consideration. The review could also decide on the removal of the agenda item.

On the issue of resolutions, I should like to make a final remark on consensus. Consensus can be overused and even misused as a pseudo right of veto for the very few. The Greentree report points out that consensus does not require absolute unanimity and that Member States should not be too reluctant to dissent from time to time. The following are possible elements for debate on this topic: consensus should require at least that there be unanimity among the majorities within the regional groupings or that dissenting Member States justify their positions and clarify the national interests apparently at stake.

Let me conclude by taking up a challenge presented to me by various colleagues. I concluded my statement on the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Millennium Declaration by making a reference to the total weight — 3,000 kilograms — of the brains available to us here in New York. A number of colleagues wondered if I could also produce a figure indicating the quality of those brains. I shall not venture to undertake such a hazardous enterprise. But to stimulate those brains, we need political will and experience in the United Nations system. With regard to the last variable, again, simple calculus indicates that in our Missions in New York, we have accumulated more than 6,000 years of United Nations experience. In no other place in the world is the potential to produce practical and innovative ideas for revitalizing the General Assembly so high. Let us live up to that potential.

Ms. Ferrari (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): My delegation, while aligning itself with the statements by Ambassador Bennouna on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Ambassador Limon on behalf of the States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), considers it appropriate to make some brief comments on the specific concerns of the smallest Member States of the United Nations. I speak of those Missions whose staff can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

My Government is firm in its view that it is vital to our national interests that we maintain a presence at this forum, although the cost of establishing and maintaining a Mission in New York puts a great strain on an already overburdened economy. For that reason, it is critical that the representatives here in New York serve their country well. However, I shall try to pinpoint one or two reasons why it is so very difficult for mini-States to play the kind of role to which we aspire.

The President took the Chair.

For a start, I draw members' attention to the *Journal of the United Nations* for Monday, 27 October 2003, a typical day at the United Nations at this time of year. In addition to plenary meetings of the General Assembly, there were meetings of all the Main Committees except the Fifth — all of them discussing issues that are of vital importance to small Member States. There was voting in the First Committee. Of particular relevance to my Mission, there were also three meetings of the Group of 77, a meeting of the CARICOM group, informal consultations on a variety of matters, a meeting of legal advisers, and a plethora of other events that we should have liked to attend. Add to that nightmarish scenario the vast mountain of official — and unofficial — documentation that must be tackled on a daily basis, and one will easily see that a dozen or more persons would be needed for a delegation to function in even a modest way. It is one thing for the Member States whose staff listings take up several pages of the Blue Book; it is quite another matter for the smallest of the small.

I make the point to reinforce what my delegation said last year when we addressed the plenary on this agenda item. The vast majority of the work of the United Nations is crammed into the three months between September and December. For the rest of the year, while we are active, the agenda is not nearly so demanding. Therefore we ask again: Can we not rearrange the schedule so that the work can be more evenly spread throughout the year? This does not seem to us to be such a revolutionary suggestion, but

whenever we mention it we are met with raised eyebrows and disapproving frowns. We have inflicted this agenda on ourselves and we should now pause and consider whether we cannot do better.

It also seems to my delegation that we can and should impose self-discipline on ourselves when it comes to addressing the General Assembly. We firmly believe that a more rigorous time frame for delegations should be agreed and observed, and we suggest a limit of five minutes. Of course, we exclude from this suggestion the general debate and other high-level or ministerial meetings. We really do not see why delegations cannot in five minutes make their points on routine agenda items that come up for discussion every year. Does it assist to quote from every United Nations document on every issue?

We believe that the revitalization of the General Assembly is vital if this Organization is to stay at the forefront of serving the people of the world. At the present time, as is well known, the Security Council makes the decisions that are binding in international law on Member States. That is in line with the Charter. However, non-members of the Council have virtually no say in those decisions, which are not only binding but which very often impose financial obligations on us. Quite simply, we are seldom if ever consulted. We are presented with a fait accompli and we have to accept it whether we like it or not. Unlike in this Assembly, our voice there does not count for anything.

These suggestions are made from the perspective of a very small mission and are intended to stimulate debate on some small but significant ways in which we think that the work of the Organization can be streamlined to the benefit of all.

Mr. Leslie (Belize): Belize welcomes, Sir, your proactive approach to and interest in the reform and revitalization of the United Nations. Such leadership is indeed exemplary and is in part fundamental if we are to achieve more than mere incremental progress in the process at hand. It would be remiss of me not to recognize the efforts and achievements of former Presidents of the General Assembly, including the current Foreign Minister and former Ambassador of Guyana, Mr. Insanally, in respect of the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

At the outset, Belize aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Suriname on behalf of the Caribbean Community member States to the United Nations and underscores, as he did, that we are unequivocal in our commitment to working towards meaningful advancement in this decade-long process.

For small developing countries like my own, the General Assembly represents a levelled field on which each Member State can participate on an equal footing in the decision-making process of the most universal policy-making body in the international arena. One vote per State — that is the epitome of representative democracy, the essence of the General Assembly and the hallmark of the United Nations process of multilateralism. In that regard, the people of the world have entrusted their aspirations for universal justice and peace and the right to build better futures for their children to the United Nations, and more specifically to this Assembly. In no uncertain terms, the people of the world have given us a mandate. It behoves us to act now to ensure that the United Nations has the necessary effective mechanisms to fulfil those aspirations of our people.

This joint debate is inclusive of several agenda items, including that on the status of implementation of actions described in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change". We are pleased to learn of the progress made in implementation. We note with interest the conclusions of that report, in particular with respect to the advantages to be had from the confluence of the initiatives of the Secretary-General's agenda for change and that of the General Assembly for revitalization.

For the purposes of my delegation's intervention, I would like to comment on three issues in the revitalization of the General Assembly: the role of the General Assembly; leadership, in particular the role of the President; and media interest.

With respect to the role of the General Assembly, in your remarks at the opening of the general debate, Sir, you stated that:

> "The General Assembly has oversight of the United Nations system as a whole, and hence has before it the full range of international issues. As advocate, supervisor and policy-making body, it must give the direction necessary to ensure coherence in the system, so that the Organization may respond in a holistic manner to the many challenges it faces". (*A/58/PV.7, p. 1*)

My delegation is in full agreement with that statement. For that reason, it is expedient, in our view, that we revive the role of the General Assembly as the supreme political body that addresses major international issues. The question is: How would we solicit varying responses and how is this linked to other issues, including the agenda? As a preliminary answer, my delegation would like to offer that the General Assembly may revive its role by having more meaningful deliberations and debates, rather than the scripted and non-interactive approach, and by focusing on implementation of its resolutions and decisions without compromising or marginalizing the issues on its agenda.

On the matter of leadership and the office of the President, we would further posit that the revitalization of the General Assembly, and particularly its centrality, is inextricably linked to the role of the President. As early as its resolution 46/77 of 12 December 1991, the General Assembly acknowledged that its capability to fulfil its role as prescribed under the Charter of the United Nations was linked to the roles of the President of the General Assembly and the Secretariat in dealing with the affairs of the General Assembly. That resolution further recognized the need to ensure the assignment of adequate staff and the provision of adequate facilities to enable the President of the Assembly to carry out his functions and responsibilities. My delegation is of the view that the time is opportune to revisit how the role of the President can be enhanced through the strengthening of that office.

With respect to media interest, my delegation would like to underscore the importance of the press in the revitalization of the General Assembly. That interest may logically follow from our efforts to revive the Assembly's role, but it is an interest that we must nonetheless actively seek out and engage. My delegation would like to reiterate its willingness to work along with others in the efforts for the revitalization and reform of the General Assembly and the United Nations with a view to achieving concrete results. We fully agree with the consensus that it is now time for us to change.

Mr. Niang (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the excellent reports he has submitted to our Assembly, which testify to his ardent commitment to working to make our Organization ever more credible, effective and thereby more capable of meeting the complex and most critical challenges of our time.

It is also fortunate that you, Sir, following the example of your illustrious predecessors, from the very first days of your term of office have brought faith and determination to this extraordinary and healthy effort to invigorate the Organization by means of a rationalized approach to its actions so as to achieve the aspirations of our global village.

Clearly, the tasks that lie ahead are important, vast and multifaceted. They will affect established practices and engrained habits related, among other things, to the composition and functioning of organs, the oversight of their activities and their working procedures.

Nevertheless, the revitalization of this jewel is a possible undertaking, as attested to by the relevant proposals contained in the reports of the Secretary-General before us for debate today. Bearing in mind the time constraints, I shall limit myself to addressing three points: revitalizing the General Assembly, improving the working methods of the General Assembly and the oversight of United Nations activities.

In this, Senegal fully endorses the sound observations and proposals put forward by the Ambassador of Algeria, coordinator of the working group of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by the Ambassador of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, on the evaluation of progress achieved since 1997 on the rationalization of the agenda of the General Assembly and its working methods, the implementation of resolutions and decisions, additional measures needed to curb and correct the relative marginalization of the General Assembly, and urgently providing, in accordance with resolution 57/270 B, integrated follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, with the aim of progressively achieving the goals set by the Millennium Summit.

In the eyes of my delegation, the revitalization of the General Assembly, as the privileged forum for deliberation on questions of concern to the international community, should enable that body to recover its fundamental mission of drawing on the strengths of multilateralism by making — to use the words of the President — strategic choices for positive achievement.

More than ever, our Organization should strive to act — rather than react — diligently and pragmatically, with realism and effectiveness, in the face of the ills, risks and challenges confronting humankind everywhere, inexorably assailing us. From that perspective, the General Assembly would naturally be the forum for the initiatives of the international community in the context of globalization and the liberalization of the economy, when considering the ravages of poverty, illiteracy and endemics.

In that context, I wish to welcome the creation of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, led by Under-Secretary-General Gambari. Among the priority tasks of the Office is to coordinate — at an appropriate time — valuable support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development. No less significant are the activities and projects of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Ambassador Chowdhury, who deserves our full support in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action and the Cotonou Agreement.

The time for action has come. I would therefore like to welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to create a high-level panel to monitor financing for development in keeping with the Millennium Goals, in the framework of the proposed programme budget for 2004-2005.

In order to be effective, the United Nations must be wary of being caught in the tendency to drift that is inherent to bureaucracies. The bureaucracy tends to grow constantly and become a force of inertia — which blocks the work of the Organization it is supposed to serve. To recognize this, one needs only weigh the tangible results of the endless parade of international conferences — some 15,500 over the last two years — against their exorbitant cost; their sheer number and lack of success undermine the value, relevance and authority of the regular and special sessions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

With respect to the countless reports that few delegations have the time to read or even glance through, the delegation of Senegal raises the question of the chronic problem of the quality, volume and delays in the issue of the documentation provided, while deploring the fact that Member States, especially delegations working in French, do not always receive equal treatment, despite the sacrosanct principle of multilingualism. We therefore need to significantly reduce the number of official meetings and the overwhelming volume of documentation, while strengthening the resources of the Department of Public Information, in particular to update on a daily basis the web site of the United Nations in all its working languages.

My delegation welcomes the decision of the Secretary-General to cancel 192 reports and publications in the 2004-2005 budget. In support of that decision, Senegal believes that it would be useful to combine reports on related issues, limit their number and set strict rules for the length of these documents. We believe priorities should be established for the biennialization or triennialization of draft resolutions and decisions, while ensuring, as noted by our friends from the Caribbean Community, that this action should not lead to the neglect or relegation to a secondary position of issues of primary importance to one group of States but which are deemed to be of less importance by another, influential group.

I must also address the crucial role of the oversight of budgeting and administration in the functioning of our Organization. In that respect, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), which is the only independent external oversight body responsible for evaluating the efficiency of the United Nations, should be given means commensurate with its objective of enhancing the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations system.

The human resources of the JIU should therefore be bolstered by maintaining, if not increasing, the number of inspectors — at present a total of 11, three from Western European and other States and two from each of the other regions — and by increasing the number of research assistants, now 7, who assist inspectors in their tasks. In addition to its investigations, evaluations and proposals for reform, its mission should include monitoring implementation of recommendations and responding to inspection requests from the executive heads of the 12 bodies of the United Nations system that have recognized the status of the JIU.

With respect to the status of the inspectors, we feel it is crucial to insist on maintaining the tested rules and procedures for selection and nomination without needing — here as elsewhere — to reinvent the wheel or to turn the inspectors into accountants or auditors-

verifiers competing with the existing Board of Auditors. The inspectors should possess a proven administrative and financial background. Thus, the composition of the JIU should not be based solely on the financial and budgetary criteria. Equally important are administrative and managerial skills and diplomatic and international experience grounded in first-hand experience with the United Nations system. That is why the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions recommends that the relevant provisions of the JIU continue to be applied.

Any change in methodology would in no way ensure the enhanced functioning of the body and might even have adverse effects. Likewise, the current geographical balance of the composition of the JIU seems acceptable, although Africa's representation, with just two seats, could evidently be improved. Thus, any possible process of reform for the JIU should be based on a methodical, transparent and consensual approach resisting any precipitous change, which would be detrimental to the functioning of the structure and to the good working order of the Organization.

In conclusion, I would like to pay warm tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette for the quality of their reports and the relevance of their proposals, including the creation of a panel of eminent persons on the reform of the organs of the United Nations. Senegal therefore hopes that a new era will dawn very soon for the United Nations through a synergy of effort and fruitful reflection that is shared, proactive and resolute in serving humanity.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The changes called for by the peoples of the members countries of this world Organization are directly related to its capacity to address current challenges and needs of the international community.

My delegation wishes to recall that there are mandates stemming from the most recent summits of the non-aligned countries, as well as of the Rio Group, to proceed with strengthening the multilateral system and with United Nations reform. I must mention the very sound points raised by the Secretary-General to the effect that reform of the entire international structure is needed. It is essential that we all make efforts to make progress in the reform process of the multilateral system.

The member countries of the United Nations should make the Organization more democratic, relevant and effective. That is what people are calling for. A few days ago in this Hall, I said that, if we do not change the multilateral structure of the United Nations and its specialized agencies to make them responsive to the needs of our peoples, we will have doomed to failure the greatest effort of concerted action in the history of humankind.

Reform or change cannot be done partially. It must be undertaken from a comprehensive approach that includes all parts of the whole, thus making it possible to strengthen the United Nations system and the multilateral system. An important part of this process is convincing the Permanent Representatives of the importance of this issue and recruiting their efforts so that we can move diligently to achieve the reform we want so much.

Our countries are immersed in an interdependent and highly linked world, which makes necessary a transparent and democratic international community that is sensitive to the needs of all and is ready to seek comprehensive solutions to common problems. No one can be autarchic at this time in history. We need to analyse the current state of affairs in order to find avenues where mandates and consensus already exist and where we can move swiftly without the need for protracted negotiations. I invite everyone to seek, in the best spirit, consensus on reform. I firmly believe that we need to unite positions and realities so that we can agree on the changes that we all want.

I have attended almost all the debates and the consultations held on this issue. All heads of Missions and Government, including heads of State, and Permanent Representatives have expressed their support. We must not lose this opportunity to make progress, under your leadership, Sir, in the purposes and principles of the Charter.

We have before us a variety of proposals that have many merits and that deserve our close attention. Let us begin the process of change that we want so much.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): At the outset, I commend you, Mr. President, for taking early and serious initiatives to advance the agenda of United Nations reform. This debate could not have been timelier, as it is taking place soon after the Secretary-General proposed to set up a blue ribbon panel to revitalize the

United Nations. You, Sir, will have our full support in your efforts.

I would like to align myself with the statements made by Ambassador Baali of Algeria and Ambassador Bennouna of Morocco on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and of the Group of 77 and China respectively. I also wish to add our own thoughts to this extremely important issue before us.

The United Nations is doddering along, fragile and tired, requiring more efficiency and effectiveness to perform its tasks. Past efforts to rejuvenate it have been slow and largely confined to reforms within the Secretariat. Change in intergovernmental bodies has been partial and procedural. Sterile debate on substantive reforms has dragged on for a long time. This lack of progress has emboldened people on the left and right fringes to question the very raison d'etre of the world body.

We must not let those detractors destroy the United Nations. Indeed, the choice is between desperation and determination. We can throw up our hands in desperation and join the bandwagon of those who wish to see the demise of the United Nations, convinced that it is beyond repair, or we can summon our determination to take resolute steps and renew and revamp this Organization.

Tinkering at the margin with insignificant procedural changes is not what the United Nations needs now. We need real bold initiatives to change business as usual and to relentlessly shape the United Nations into an Organization that has the vision, means and tools to confront the emerging challenges of a new world.

Nepal is committed to working with those forces that are determined to put the United Nations at the centre of multilateralism and to inject potent doses of reform to revive the Organization. We understand that there will be setbacks and disappointments on this path, but this is the only practical and viable course of action to make the United Nations vibrant, efficient and effective in its service to humanity.

This is a defining moment for the United Nations. At this juncture, reforms must be bolder in approach and more innovative in content. They must be coherent and comprehensive, as well as substantive and doable. Half-hearted efforts along the lines of least resistance will not be sufficient, and this debate affords us the opportunity to develop such reforms.

We have undertaken some procedural reforms, as I said. For instance, within the General Assembly, biennializing and triennializing, as well as clustering agenda items, reducing time for the general debate and eliminating conference services after hours have instilled more discipline in us and in our work. Some changes have taken place in the methods of work of the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.

These measures have certainly been useful. They have reduced cost and have increased efficiency, but they have been distressingly insufficient to make the United Nations more effective in terms of its outputs and results. On the contrary, recent events have seriously dented the reputation and legitimacy of the United Nations. We must rectify that situation.

Indeed, there is no panacea for fixing the problems and lifting the stature of the United Nations. A series of actions will have to be taken and each organ will need some common and specific steps for procedural and structural reorganization and revitalization.

Critical to revamping the General Assembly are the measures I have encapsulated in the acronym CAMSSIB, which stands for Cluster and consolidate the agenda, Adapt the agenda to emerging needs, Merge and reorganize the Committees and subcommittees, Strengthen the Office of the President, Stagger the work of the General Assembly throughout the session, Implement the resolutions the General Assembly adopts and Budget allocation should conform to priorities.

For example, there is tremendous room for clustering and consolidating a number of agenda items in virtually all Main Committees of the General Assembly. During the fifty-seventh session, the Fifth Committee took the lead to consolidate several agenda items into one. Similar steps can be taken in other Committees as well, with safeguards to ensure that the importance of any individual item is not undermined.

Adaptation of agenda items to the changing needs has become imperative. Many items have gradually lost resonance and relevance with the passage of time and others have acquired fresh urgency with new dimensions and nuances. Some of the cold war issues have become outdated, while HIV/AIDS, severe acute

respiratory syndrome (SARS) and sustainable development have become more important global priorities.

The idea of merging the First Committee and Fourth Committee is an interesting one. It makes sense in that these Committees have related agendas and modest caseloads. Nepal is willing to consider the issue of merger if the key areas of both Committees do not suffer neglect due to the merger.

Staggering the work of the Committees throughout the session can be a way to mitigate pressure on the fall session. The Fifth Committee already has the fall session and two resumed sessions due to heavy workload. The Second and Third Committees could also meet more than once, as necessary. This will enable small delegations to better follow the General Assembly's work.

Strengthening the Office of the President of the General Assembly has received short shrift so far. We must reinforce that Office to make it more visible in structure, more respectable in stature and more substantive in content. The President should have the capacity and resources to perform his task effectively, particularly in the area of follow-up to the General Assembly resolutions.

If there is one thing that can really revamp the General Assembly and help reclaim its primacy in the United Nations system, it is to ensure the implementation of its resolutions. It would be inconceivable to implement the nearly 300 resolutions churned out every year by the General Assembly. But to start with, the Assembly can and should select five to ten non-controversial resolutions for serious implementation and follow-up.

Such follow-up will instil self-discipline among Member States and encourage them to push through only those resolutions that stand the chance of being followed-up. Only concrete results of the General Assembly's work will create a strong constituency among peoples around the world and strengthen this most representative body of the United Nations.

Nepal has welcomed the reforms undertaken pursuant to the Secretary-General's recommendations of last year and worked willingly to implement many of them. Indeed, we support efforts to link the budget with the priorities of the United Nations. We also underline the imperative to strike a balance between the need for legislative control and administrative flexibility in order to optimize the output and results of United Nations activities.

The Economic and Social Council also needs bold reforms to make it more relevant and effective. Key again is the implementation of its resolutions and decisions. The Council must convince people across the globe that its work can make a real difference in their lives. For this, it must engage more closely and substantively with its implementation partners so they develop a sense of ownership and commitment to implement the decisions of the Council.

Coordination and coherence is equally important for the Economic and Social Council, but it has not been able to coordinate its activities with that of its subsidiary bodies and its oversight function leaves much to be desired. The annual interaction with its commissions and funds and programmes is woefully insufficient to strengthen the partnership that is vital to implementation of the Council's decisions.

Meanwhile, the Council should strive to enhance its performance by rationalizing its work with a timely agenda and calibrated meetings. A long substantive session is not conducive to this, as it tires out delegates and diminishes their marginal productivity. The Council, therefore, should meet throughout the year, if necessary, and certainly not squeeze all segments together at one stretch. The idea of an economic and social security council deserves careful examination as well, but such a council should come without the fetters of the Security Council.

Questions have also been raised in some quarters about the rationale for having the Council's meeting in alternate years in New York and Geneva. Of course, this is a politically sensitive issue and must be visited in the context of a comprehensive reform, not in isolation.

Security Council reform has proved a difficult pill to swallow. The open-ended working group mulling over this matter has failed to make any breakthrough for a decade. The Iraq debacle has reinforced the clarion call to make the Council's structure more representative and its method of work more transparent and participatory in order to enhance its legitimacy and to ensure the support it needs from the community of nations.

Nepal has always supported a limited expansion of the Security Council, both in permanent and non-permanent categories of membership. But the questions, among others, of veto power and of candidates for the privilege have deadlocked the question of enlargement in the first category. To resolve these knotty issues, non-Council members should persist in their prodding and the permanent members must agree on a reasonable framework for reform.

The reforms the Security Council has undertaken to make its work more transparent and participatory are distressingly inadequate. In particular, troop-contributing countries should have a greater role in the Council's decision-making and in mission planning, for they are the ones that put the lives of their nationals on the line in dangerous missions.

Nepal welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal to set up a blue ribbon panel to recommend reform measures. The panel must be small and yet reflect the diversity of the interests and constituencies to which the United Nations has to cater. That panel must engage in wide and meaningful consultations with Member States and other stakeholders to make its recommendations more palatable to them.

Clearly, the international community has the shared obligation to make the world a more peaceful, prosperous and just place for all of us. It has recognized this imperative in a number of global compacts, including the Millennium Declaration. No one should shy away from their commitment, including their commitment to revamping the United Nations.

Desperation will lead us to defeat; determination, to success. We must therefore choose determination over desperation, engage in reforming the United Nations and help the Organization to win the hearts and minds of ordinary people around the world and to firmly establish itself in global public consciousness. To do this, the world body must focus on three cardinal priorities regarding its resolutions and decisions, and those three cardinal priorities are implementation, implementation and implementation.

Mr. Severin (Saint Lucia): I have the honour to present the views of Saint Lucia in this debate on matters relating to the reform of the United Nations, strengthening of the United Nations system and revitalization of the work of the General Assembly.

The delegation of Saint Lucia associates itself with the statement made by Suriname, on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community, but we find it necessary to provide further insights of our own on the matters before us.

While the historical background to the debate would be useful here, I have been careful to heed your call, Mr. President, for the presentation of specific proposals that are focused and concise.

Mr. President, in your informal note of 15 October, you had proposed that further consideration of the matter of revitalization of the General Assembly be pursued under the broad rubric of two thematic areas, namely, enhancing the authority and role of the General Assembly and improving the Assembly's working methods. We believe that there is much merit in this approach, and have undertaken to offer the following proposals for consideration along those lines.

In a very real sense, the General Assembly President embodies the authority of the Organization's membership. The Office of the President should reflect and project that authority, and, in this regard, the capacity of that Office to provide confident, competent and effective leadership to the Assembly should be enhanced.

An incoming President should not have to deal with the obligation to staff his or her office utilizing manpower resources from his or her country. Rather, the Office of the President should be provided with full-time professional support from the Secretariat. A standing office comprising a minimum of three to five highly experienced and competent United Nations professional staff should be established for this purpose. Of course, the President would be free to augment those resources, if he or she considers it necessary, using personnel from other sources.

Even before formal assumption of office, the President-elect should have available to him or her a transition office with administrative and secretarial support from the Secretariat. It would be eminently sensible for the President and the President-elect to hold informal consultations as often as possible during the transition period, and generally work out among themselves mechanisms to ensure a smooth transition of presidencies, continuity in the work of the President's office and overall effectiveness of the system.

If we are ever to realize the enhancement of the role and authority of the General Assembly that we all seek, we must ensure that we continue to work through that body, except where the Organization's Charter and rules dictate otherwise. In so doing, however, we must be careful to maintain and to enhance the relationship between the General Assembly and other principal organs of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, bearing in mind also that those organs act on behalf of the general membership of the United Nations. In this regard, it appears appropriate that regular formal briefings between the President of the General Assembly and the Presidents of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as the Secretary-General, be institutionalized.

We all agree that there are serious flaws in the way we conduct the business of the General Assembly and that fundamental changes are required. It is my delegation's view that consideration should be given to organizing our work in such a manner that the work of the six Main Committees would be extended beyond the customary three-month period. This would bring about a more efficient use of our resources, and facilitate a more effective participation of all Member States, particularly those with small missions. We maintain that the current system, involving frenzied activity within the six Main Committees, meeting in parallel over two and-a-half months, plus the Security Council, subsidiary bodies, regional bodies and plenary meetings of the Assembly, all competing for our attention at the same time and all engaged in a mad rush to complete complex and lengthy work programmes by mid-December, represents a most inefficient use of our manpower resources, our time, and our taxpayers' money. This system of operating robs us all of the opportunity for more deliberate and meaningful consideration of the work before us.

The general debate represents an essential element in the life and work of the General Assembly, and the regular participation of our heads of State or Government should not only be welcomed but also encouraged. The United Nations is an intergovernmental body, and we would all do well to remind ourselves of the source of its authority and mandate.

Every year, our heads of State or Government address us, issuing statements that are in essence the policy directions that we are required to follow. The problem, however, is that we have not been successful in building the critical linkages between these statements and our work and between the general debate and the work of the Assembly, the Main Committees and the subsidiary committees.

My delegation wishes to propose that we address this matter along the following lines: that we view the general debate as the source from which we would distil the policy elements that underlie our work. These elements would be refined and given greater definition in the Main Committees and subsidiary bodies. There the identified issues would be debated and draft resolutions generated for consideration in the plenary, and then we would proceed to a final session of the General Assembly.

This format would result in greater logic and coherence in the work of the General Assembly, it would make possible a more convenient and delegation-friendly sequencing of our work and it would remove the necessity for major work activities taking place in parallel and the disruptive consequences thereof for small delegations.

My delegation believes that the suggestions that we offer for consideration address fundamentals. We have chosen not to address microlevel issues such as, for example, the redesigning of resolutions to make them more effective. We believe that little or no progress will be achieved unless we are able to effect profound changes in the way we conduct our work. It is my delegation's hope that our small contribution to this joint debate will assist in bringing about the reform and revitalization that has occupied our attention for so long.

Mr. Gansukh (Mongolia): My delegation wishes at the outset to associate itself with the statements made yesterday by the representative of Algeria, as Coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on United Nations Reform and Revitalization of the General Assembly, and the representative of Morocco, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Like many others, my delegation attaches particular importance to this joint discussion of agenda items related to the process of reform and revitalization of the United Nations. Indeed, reform and revitalization of our Organization — as you, Mr. President, rightly pointed out in your opening statement — is key to the success of our initiatives and is, therefore, among our priorities.

Looking back over the past decade — with its series of international development conferences and summits, generating important declarations and plans of action — one might describe it as a decade of commitment to development. But we must always remember that people in general, and those in the developing world in particular, are tired of unfulfilled promises; they value deeds higher than lofty but hollow declarations. In this regard, Mongolia views reform as another decisive step towards restoring confidence in our Organization.

Everyone agrees that today reform is more necessary than ever in order to enable the United Nations to efficiently tackle the challenges our world is facing. Efforts have been made continuously over the past decades, and a number of open-ended working groups have been set up to that end. Unfortunately, little progress has been made in the practical implementation of the reform process. There is, therefore, an urgent need to speed up the reform process by identifying innovative approaches. We need to rethink what kind of reform is needed and for what purpose. We need to take into account the realities of the present world and the challenges they present for the United Nations.

Here, I wish to express our support for the statement made this morning by Ambassador Mahbubani of Singapore. I am confident that the points he raised in his statement, along with those outlined by others, will offer important guidance in our future work on this matter.

While reaffirming Mongolia's support for the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a panel of eminent personalities, I also wish to support the view expressed by many others, and by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands in particular, on work in parallel, and that the panel's work and our work in New York should complement, rather then compete with, each other.

It goes without saying that an important part of the United Nations reform process is the revitalization of the General Assembly and the strengthening of its role. Over the past decade, the General Assembly has adopted several resolutions aimed at rationalizing its working methods and improving its efficiency. There was resounding support during the general debate last month for the central role of the General Assembly as an advocate and the supervisory and policy-making body of the Organization. In this regard, my delegation expresses its appreciation to you, Mr. President, and your predecessors for your untiring efforts to move this process forward. We believe that matters proposed under the two broad areas of the revitalization process should be given careful consideration and approval by Member States.

We can see from the reports submitted by the Secretary-General on the agenda items under consideration that concrete steps have been taken to implement the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. But, as Ambassador Baali of Algeria, Coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group, emphasized earlier in his statement, the measures outlined in those resolutions put more emphasis on the rationalization of the agenda of the General Assembly and its working methods, than on the substantive aspects of the revitalization process. Those measures have had a minimal impact in achieving the main goal set out in paragraph 30 of the Millennium Declaration and resolution 55/285, which states that the goal of this reform is to enable the Assembly to play its role effectively as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative body of the United Nations.

My delegation fully shares the view that a genuine and authentic revitalization of the General Assembly can only be achieved through additional innovative measures that tackle the problem of the relative marginalization of the General Assembly and its relationship with other organs of the United Nations. We hope that issues related to the revitalization of the Assembly and specific measures that you, Mr. President, have proposed in your non-paper will be considered in more detail during the open-ended informal consultations of the plenary that you intend to convene next month.

Turning to the agenda item entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system", I wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and his staff for their continuing efforts to implement the Secretary-General's agenda for additional change, particularly the initiatives for improving the current budgeting and planning process and reform of the Department of Public Information. My delegation expresses its confidence that, with the support and enhanced cooperation of Member States, additional efforts will be made to fully implement the Secretary-General's agenda for further change.

Mr. Rahmatalla (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his initiative to strengthen the United Nations and to follow up on the implementation of the reform measures contained in General Assembly resolution 57/300. We would like to associate ourselves also with the statement by the representative of the Kingdom of Morocco, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as the representative of Algeria, speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

In his report on strengthening the United Nations, the Secretary-General emphasized that this matter depends on introducing appropriate modifications to the intergovernmental bodies, starting with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. We concur with the Secretary-General's initiative, contained in his statement of 23 September to establish a high-level panel of eminent persons to put forward proposals regarding United Nations reform.

That appeal was further strengthened by the Declaration made by heads of State or Government and Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Assembly in the course of this session on the need to modify and reform the principal organs of the United Nations — the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council.

Reform of the United Nations to strengthen its role and effectiveness requires that specific proposals be put forward relating to reform and its implementation as well as to the legal and administrative steps that need to be taken to achieve the hoped-for results.

The paper dated 17 October submitted by the President of the General Assembly under item 11, the report of the Security Council, which lists the contents of the various statements made by States in the course of three meetings, reflects the aspirations of those States, even if those declarations focused in the main on one single question — that is, the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

It goes without saying that most States have their own positions and their own proposals regarding the strengthening of the role of the United Nations. The point of departure could be the agenda of the General Assembly itself, which annually is encumbered by a number of items — well beyond the Assembly's real capacity. That makes it impossible for such matters to be discussed in depth or for decisions to be taken on them, so that they do not have to reappear once again on the next agenda.

In order to achieve that result, Member States should be keen to raise issues that are of general importance or to give priority to issues that directly deal with strengthening the role of the United Nations. In that connection we would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for the steps that have been taken, which are described in his report (A/58/351). We believe that those reforms do not touch on substantive issues, but, if we are resolved to carry out the reform that is needed and that has been demanded by States for a decade, we can do so.

We must show the necessary political will to enter the implementation phase. The statements which have been made on United Nations reform contain a wealth of different thoughts, proposals and views about how this can be done. If a Committee were to take up those suggestions, it could distil from them a document that could be considered in some detail, so that an overall plan could be drawn up to identify what steps need to be taken.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe): I join my colleagues in recognizing the significance of today's meeting on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly at a time when there is a growing perception among the majority of the United Nations membership that the General Assembly has been marginalized and its role neglected.

In this regard, I want to associate my delegation with the statement made on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement by Ambassador Abdallah Baali, the Coordinator of the Working Group of the Non-Aligned Movement on the Revitalization of the General Assembly and United Nations Reform.

Mr. President, those of us with a purposeful and creative vision and who are ready to make determined efforts to rekindle the General Assembly's original inspiration and to imbue it with a new sense of purpose and direction accept and welcome the wisdom of your decision to focus, in the prevailing circumstances, on microlevel reform as a more promising road map than macrolevel reform.

It is often assumed that the General Assembly could acquire greater effectiveness through far-

reaching amendments of the Charter. There is no doubt that the General Assembly would benefit from such an exercise. But there is one roadblock — such amendments are subject to approval by the permanent five members of the Security Council, and they can choose to veto them.

Sir, among the issues raised in your summary of the open-ended informal consultations of the plenary on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is the diminishing role of the General Assembly due to the preference of some Member States to work through the Security Council. Not only do I concur with that pertinent observation, but I am also persuaded to add that the severe challenge to the democratic process at the global level is largely rooted in the division of roles and agendas between the General Assembly and the Security Council, and the interrelationship between these two bodies. It is a fact that no meaningful reform of the United Nations is possible without addressing the issue of the respective roles and mutual relationships of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

A historical and empirical examination of the United Nations system shows that one of the primary exogenous challenges to this body was the cold-war environment of yesteryear. The institutional response of the United Nations to the cold-war challenge was to attempt in 1947 to shift decision-making power with respect to security matters away from the Security Council to the General Assembly, because of the deadlock resulting from ideological differences among the permanent members.

In those early years, when it had a pro-western majority, the General Assembly was hailed in northern circles as the "parliament" or the "town meeting of the world". But, having become a virtually universal body in the last 40 years, its new majority has been scorned as irresponsible and the Assembly as a useless talk shop. That imagery is reinforced by those who find it difficult to sit through any significant number of speeches in plenaries of the Assembly.

Also related to the above is the absence of any serious effort to establish annual calendars of work suited to the needs and agenda of the new millennium. It is thus easier for commentators eager to belittle and marginalize the Assembly to claim that it cannot carry out its business effectively.

By every criterion of democratic constitutional law and actual practice, the General Assembly is the paramount organ of the United Nations, superior to the Security Council and central to the whole organization. But, sadly, little is known of the General Assembly's powers.

Our debate today must of necessity be inward-looking, as we turn to the United Nations Charter for guidance on what should be done to revitalize the work of the General Assembly.

By Article 10 of the Charter, the General Assembly is expressly authorized to discuss any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs as provided for in the Charter. That includes the Security Council, among other organs.

Only the General Assembly is mandated in the Charter to consider the principles involved in peace and security, and in disarmament and arms regulation, per Article 11.1, and to initiate studies and make recommendations for the promotion of international cooperation in the political field and for the encouragement of the progressive development of international law and its codification, per Article 13.1.

The General Assembly is thus clearly mandated to establish the overall policies under which the Security Council can discharge its delegated responsibilities. I suggest that the General Assembly adopt a declaration of principles and guidelines to cover any United Nations intervention in a grave domestic situation within a Member State. That is in line with the recommendation by the South Centre that the General Assembly should decide that the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the United Nations, in consultation with the Sixth Committee, prepare a declaration of general principles and guidelines for decisions by the United Nations on international action in grave domestic situations, including mechanisms for the General Assembly to make determinations and, under Article 11.3, to call the attention of the Security Council to such situations.

Although it is a fact that is very little known, the Security Council is not exclusively responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. Even in the Charter, in Articles 10 to 14, responsibility for the peaceful settlement of disputes is shared between the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Furthermore, under resolution 46/59, the General Assembly can send its own fact-finding missions. The sharing of responsibilities for international peace and security are well articulated in the General Assembly resolution 47/120 entitled "An Agenda for Peace: preventive diplomacy and related matters", adopted on 18 December 1992.

It is time we ceased awaiting the convenience of the Security Council and got the General Assembly to act, as it is the superior policy-generating and decision-making body in international law. The developing countries, with the support and collaboration of interested developed countries, should demand that the General Assembly reassert its interest and role in peacekeeping, peace, security and humanitarian assistance.

In order to ensure that the appropriate structures and mechanisms are established and to improve the United Nations response in the situations described above, the General Assembly should establish a high-level intergovernmental expert group to review the causes of complex crises and emergencies and draw conclusions on the handling of such emergencies. The group should make policy and institutional and operational recommendations on how the United Nations should address emergencies in the future, using a more democratic, broad-based and demilitarized approach.

The Charter stipulates in Article 12, paragraph 1, that the Assembly cannot make any recommendation on a dispute or situation already being dealt with by the Council. But the Charter does not preclude the Assembly debating the issue, which could express as well or even better the views of the great majority on the action planned by the permanent members. This latent authority has to be activated.

There is another point of critical importance that is seldom discussed. At all times the Security Council, according to Article 24, paragraph 2, of the Charter, "shall act in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations". But if the Members of the Organization, who confer on the Council its primary responsibility, judge that the Council is not going to act in accordance with the United Nations purposes and principles, that judgement on such a fundamental matter must override the procedural restriction on the General Assembly stipulated in Article 12, paragraph 1. Thus, the Assembly is not powerless to prevent a Security Council action that violates the Charter.

In my closing remarks, I want to take this occasion to revisit the issue of the agenda and work of the Main Committees, a matter that has already been addressed at great length by the Working Group of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on United Nations Reform and Revitalization of the General Assembly.

The NAM observations on this matter, which I strongly support, are informed by resolution 48/264 and the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Once we adopt a resolution, we should take it upon ourselves to ensure that the resolution is implemented. Resolution 48/264 lays out very clear guidelines: items that cover related matters or issues could be considered in agreed clusters. That approach allows us to address our work in a more purposeful and focused manner. Related to that is the need on our part to adopt resolutions that are short, to the point and, above all, implementable. We have been slack in following up on our resolutions. Unless we devote sufficient attention to the implementation of those resolutions, there is no justifiable reason for us to call for significant reform of the General Assembly.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): We thank you, Mr. President, for your dynamic leadership in ensuring that this important debate on the question of United Nations reform remains and continues to be at the forefront of our work and in our minds.

We also thank, through you, Mr. President, the Secretary-General and Deputy-Secretary-General for their leadership in the constructive work in the reform process which continues within the United Nations Secretariat. Their efforts are being felt in many of our countries, and I highlight the United Nations work in developing countries through the simplification and harmonization of procedures, joint programming, pooling of resources, better knowledge management and improvements in the development of the resident coordinator system.

We also associate ourselves with the many positive aspects and observations already highlighted and alluded to in the statements of the Pacific Islands Forum Group, the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement.

As already noted and covered by many colleagues in their statements during this debate, the need for

change is not the issue. Our challenge is how we collectively effect that change. There is a distinct air of anticipation, and it has been stated openly, both within and outside this Hall, that at no other time in the past has there been a better opportunity to make those critical changes.

In participating in this important debate, we wish to limit ourselves to issues under agenda item 55 and specifically focus on United Nations resolutions.

When we look briefly at the history of this Organization, especially how and why it was born, we note that the leaders of that era saw the fundamental need for global change. They realized that the world needed to establish a global framework in which all of humanity could live together and function in an orderly and peaceful manner.

Notwithstanding all the criticism and negativity encountered by the United Nations since its birth, it still stands as probably the only credible world body that can harness the collective focus of all States of the world under one roof on many common issues of concern.

The United Nations has become an institution in which the rich and poor, the weak and powerful can, in an orderly and respectful manner, voice their opinions in debate and be heard — where debates can unite opposites and partnerships can coalesce for the betterment of our collective humanity. It is the place from which the world is now waging war against humanity's common enemies, which include diseases such as HIV/AIDS and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), the devastating effects of poverty, climate change, land degradation and desertification, terrorism, human trafficking, transnational crimes and many other threatening scourges. But in considering how we undertake the continuation of those battles, we need to collectively address and continuously review the way we deal with many global issues through the work we do here.

While considering the notion of change in this debate, it is perhaps pertinent to make the observation that the founders of the United Nations also realized its need and, indeed, had the foresight to insert in the Charter the mechanism for effecting change. I do not wish to discuss here the technical issues relating to the application of the provisions of Articles 108 and 109. However, in making reference to the two articles, I would like to underline the fact that, when the United Nations was founded, it was envisaged that it would be a dynamic rather than a static body.

We are pleased that much has already been said about the many issues that we should all be concerned about when discussing reforms. So, rather than merely reiterating the many valuable contributions already made, I would like to focus on the process of making resolutions as we currently practice it at the United Nations.

At various times, we are reminded of the many resolutions that form part of the records of the United Nations. While many remain dormant because they have been unable to implement or do not have a realistic purpose, others are annually rehashed to the extent that, in some cases, the original purpose is changed, and they become irrelevant and/or obsolete.

Article 10 of the United Nations Charter does not make specific reference to resolutions, but, rather, to recommendations and decisions to describe the activities of the General Assembly. What now seems to be the accepted practice is for delegations to initiate, negotiate and move for the adoption of resolutions. Once adopted, the resolutions purport to reflect the expression of the will of the General Assembly.

However, understandably, there is a deep sense of anxiety among all of us about the annual increase in the number of resolutions, given that many current ones remain unattended to for a variety of reasons, including neglect.

We need to stop commenting on and complaining about the number of resolutions and get on with the job of cleaning up United Nations documentation as part of this reform process.

So, in the spirit of these discussions, we offer the following points for consideration: first, that there be an immediate review of all current General Assembly resolutions to determine their viability and relevance; secondly, that the process include a review of the contents of each resolution to determine whether certain provisions have been superseded by new resolutions; and thirdly, that we review in particular resolutions which may have been superseded by major international conferences and summits, such as the Millennium Summit, Monterrey, Johannesburg and others.

Turning to the question of who should review the resolutions, we favour the idea put forward by the

Ambassador of Malaysia that the Secretariat, or its Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, should be involved in the process. Perhaps, however, more thought should be given to that particular issue and options looked at.

But we strongly believe that whoever is charged with the review and eventual monitoring of the status of implementation of resolutions will do the United Nations system a very big favour.

On the other side of the resolution-making process, we should look also at enforcing certain obligations upon the proponents of resolutions and their sponsors. They should be obliged, when initiating resolutions, to provide an outline of an implementation plan. Therefore — simply put — there should be ownership of resolutions. It seems that there is a focus only on the content of a resolution and not on the process of its implementation. That is probably one of the reasons why, year after year, there is a proliferation of resolutions — because there is no ownership. We hope that some concrete steps can be taken to address that growing problem.

In conclusion, it is our view that the biggest problem with change is that if we do not change, we will be changed. The problem with being changed by other bodies or by circumstances outside our control is obvious. We need to be in control of the process of change. We have to support the leadership of the President and of the Secretary-General in this important endeavour if we are to use the greatest opportunity since the birth of the United Nations to make further lasting changes, as today's custodians of the United Nations. In doing so, we will replicate the bravery of the founders who fought those who doubted the efficacy of the United Nations, but whose vision was, in the end, proved right by history.

Let us be a part of a continuing legacy by putting our words into action.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I should like at the outset to thank you for your leadership and for sharing your vision.

Strengthening and reform of the United Nations aim to restore the Organization's centrality in the system of international relations, ensure the rule of international law and of the Charter, rebuild the system of collective security, and ensure the development of multilateralism and cooperation among States.

Reform of the United Nations necessarily involves reaffirming the full validity of the Charter, as was done three years ago in the Millennium Declaration. The purposes and principles of the Charter, including that of the sovereign equality of States, respect for the political independence of nations and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, must be applied without restriction.

There can be no far-reaching or meaningful reform of the United Nations unless we also prevent the use and threat of use of force, which is an outright breach of the principles of the Charter, which authorizes the exercise of the inherent right to self-defence only in response to an act of aggression.

Multilateralism must be defended, because it involves full compliance with international law and the practice of democracy in international relations.

There is an urgent need to restore the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security, with full and strict respect of the Charter. Its procedures, including the exercise of the veto, must be subjected to intensive review, and its membership, both permanent and non-permanent, must be expanded in order to address the inadequate representation of developing countries.

It is vital to put an end to the double standard and for the Council to cease serving hegemonic interests. Excesses, and, paradoxically, omissions in the context of the application of Chapter VII of the Charter must end, and Chapter VI should be used in its entirety and to its full extent. In its actions, the Council must honour the principle of the sovereign equality of States and put an end to discrimination against the non-permanent members, whose legitimacy is rooted in their election by the Assembly.

We are facing a complex issue: how to strengthen the United Nations in an age of an upsurge of unilateralism. How can we make the United Nations democratic in the midst of a totalitarian unipolar order?

We listened attentively to the proposal made by a permanent member which, in essence, would replace the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations with what he referred to as the "seven principles". I wish to comment on them.

First, with respect to responsibility, States must apply the Charter scrupulously, as well as the norms of international law and international humanitarian law, and fulfil in good faith all their legal obligations. The collective interest of the membership of the United Nations must prevail.

Secondly, with regard to accountability, let me say that there is nothing new about the concept of the international responsibility of States. States that commit violations of the Charter, of international law or of international humanitarian law, that cause a breach of the peace or commit acts of aggression or human rights violations, or impose coercive measures on a unilateral basis, under any pretext, must bear the legal and political consequences of their acts. Those who imperil the collective security system to satisfy hegemonistic interests incur grave political and legal responsibility. Strata of power should not be created at the United Nations that would replace the principle of sovereign equality. We do not like the idea of "he who pays the piper, calls the tune" in the context of the United Nations.

Thirdly, with respect to effectiveness, no streamlining of structure or function can compensate for a lack of political will on the part of powerful States or for the trend towards unilateralism. The double standard and the blocking of legitimate mandates do not serve the interests of the Powers and are extremely damaging.

Fourthly, with regard to stewardship of financial resources, the United Nations must once again work to ensure the right to development and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and should cease to be an agency for the micromanagement of the policies of the Bretton Woods institutions. A new financial architecture — or at least a profound reform of the existing architecture — is necessary. Contributions to the United Nations should be paid on time, in full and without political conditionalities. The changes introduced in the scale of assessments should be reviewed, as decided in resolution 55/5 C, in accordance with the payment record of the principal debtor.

Fifthly, with regard to modernization, the veto must go. Election by secret ballot of the members of all bodies should continue, as that is the fundamental principle of all democratic systems. It would be useful to consider ways and means of affirming the legitimacy of current and potential new permanent members of the Security Council, as well as of revoking that status when their conduct is incompatible with the Charter and with international law.

We must put an end to political and financial pressure for the purpose of obtaining votes. The political manipulation of the Commission on Human Rights should cease. We are ready to discuss the quality of the membership of that Commission, which includes former and current colonial Powers; current usurers of external debt; and those responsible for the most serious cases of racism and xenophobia and for flagrant, massive and systematic violations of economic and social rights, including the right to development, for corporate fraud, political corruption and even for preventing citizen participation in electoral processes and taking part in electoral fraud.

Sixth, credibility is demonstrated by the voting process and the exercise of democracy in the United Nations. Coercing third States to take certain positions by means of threats or bribery is a very serious matter. Double standards must go, particularly in using the veto. There is a disconnect between the balance of power in the United Nations and the interests of peoples and of the majority of States.

The seventh principle is that of freedom. Respect for the political independence and territorial integrity of States, and for the rights of peoples to self-determination and to struggle against foreign occupation must be universal. Hegemony must cease and democracy must be restored in international relations.

Strengthening and reforming the United Nations should enable the Organization fully to implement the Millennium Declaration commitments as they relate to the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction — in particular nuclear weapons — so as to reduce the role that they play in security doctrines and policies and to curb their further development and stockpiling. The development of new, highly lethal conventional weapons and the use of outer space for non-peaceful purposes must be prevented.

Strengthening and reforming the United Nations will also require the Organization fully to play its central analytical role international economic affairs and in coordinating the development efforts of the international community, as well as in the creation of a more just, inclusive, democratic and sustainable

international economic system. That will give developing countries access to the benefits of globalization.

The functions and prerogatives that the Charter assigns, respectively, to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council with a view to achieving its purposes must be respected. We must put an end to the Security Council's encroachment on the jurisdiction of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, including any capricious interpretation of Article 65 of the Charter designed to make the Economic and Social Council subordinate to the Security Council.

The strengthening and reform of the United Nations must aim to promote cooperation and dialogue among Member States with a view to ensuring the promotion and protection of all human rights, interdependent and interrelated as they are, for all human beings and peoples, and to take effective action to find peaceful solutions to international humanitarian problems, with strict respect for the principles and norms of international law, including international humanitarian law.

In this process, the General Assembly must reassume the broad powers and attributes granted it by the Charter — including those that might come into play as a result of any paralysis in the Security Council — so as to reject the use of force to achieve hegemonic political objectives, and so as to insist that only the peaceful settlement of disputes can lead to security, stability, justice and democracy in the world.

We must ensure that the General Assembly carries out its central functions as the main deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations in an effective, dynamic and action-oriented manner that is in keeping with current international priorities and contingencies and in accordance with the Charter.

General Assembly resolutions are not binding — nor does the General Assembly have the means to enforce them. History, however, provides many examples of how, after many years, the cumulative effect of their powerful political, ethical and legal message has had a significant impact on the international reality.

We consider the main problem today to be the lack of implementation of the many resolutions adopted by the Assembly. But the General Assembly can realistically embark on a discussion of crucial and pressing international issues with a view to adopting concrete action-oriented resolutions.

The splitting up of the calendar of its Main Committees could make a significant contribution to the Assembly's work. As it stands, the intensity of the work required and the fact that so many activities take place simultaneously in the period from October to December create an unbearable burden for the small missions of developing countries.

We must rationalize the agenda of the General Assembly by means of a patient and democratic quest for consensus. We believe, for example, that we must continue with the joint consideration of the four items now before us. We would also like to propose the idea of perhaps uniting them into one single item.

Efforts to revitalize the work of Main Committees should be harmonized with the general guidelines established for plenary meetings. We should not deceive ourselves, however: the effectiveness of the work of the General Assembly and the Committees will depend more on the political will of Member States than on changes in their working methods.

In this process, Mr. President, you may rely on the full willingness and constructive participation of the Cuban delegation.

Mr. Stańczyk (Poland): I should like to begin my statement with words of appreciation to Member States and to the Secretary-General for their commitment to improve the United Nations system. I would especially like to thank you, Mr. President, for your great determination and your courageous decision to take on and to accelerate the very difficult process of United Nations reform and, in particular, the process of revitalization of the General Assembly.

Our common objective is to make the United Nations a more effective multilateral Organization. Strengthening, enhancing and reforming the United Nations is therefore necessary and urgent. Poland attaches great importance to this ongoing process and to all the other proposals on United Nations reform presented so far.

My delegation fully supports the statement made by the Italian Permanent Representative, Ambassador

Spatafora, on behalf of the European Union (EU). I would like in particular to emphasize the proposals presented by the EU concerning changes in the work of the General Assembly. The revitalization of the work of the General Assembly is an ongoing duty for everyone interested in having the Assembly be a place where goals can be turned into reality. To achieve this, Member States must recognize their responsibility to support the General Assembly's vital place at the centre of this world Organization.

Poland reaffirms its readiness to continue its active participation in this process. With great satisfaction we have heard all the positive responses to the proposals presented in the informal note by the President of the General Assembly to the Member States. Our substantive discussion during the first informal consultation organized last week showed that there is general agreement on many issues and on ways to improve our work in the Assembly and the Committees. In our opinion we should not wait until the end of the whole process of reform to begin implementation of these small but important steps.

Let me also emphasize, in particular, the importance of the informal discussions undertaken by the General Assembly Committees. Many important ideas on how to improve and strengthen our work were brought up in that context and we must take those ideas into consideration and find proper methods for their speedy implementation.

Poland believes that reforms in the economic and social areas constitute an important element in the process of strengthening and revitalizing the United Nations. To this effect, it is necessary to improve the efficiency and review the mandates of the various organizations and agencies working in these fields, and at the same time to promote more effective coordination among them. Poland fully supports the initiative to strengthen the Economic and Social Council and its method of working. The effectiveness of the Economic and Social Council in performing its role as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination has become an issue of utmost importance.

The reform of the United Nations in and of itself should not, however, be our ultimate goal. We have to keep in mind that we want to pursue this reform not only to make our work easier, but also because we are guided by more ambitious goals. We must also remember that the process we undertook is a first step on our long way to achieve a more significant goal for the entire international community. Reform cannot continue without a clear vision of its directions and purposes. To reform the United Nations system, we first need to clearly understand what we expect from such reform.

In order to meet the challenges related to the changing times and needs, it is necessary to redefine the United Nations objectives, and where possible, improve the Organization and reinvigorate its operations. The United Nations, if it wants to preserve its vital role as the most important multilateral organization, must adapt itself to swiftly changing international conditions by taking the lead in pursuing institutional reforms, the development of policies, and the coordination of actions. That is why we have fully supported the initiative of the Secretary-General to establish the high-level panel of eminent personalities to examine the challenges facing the entire international community and the functioning of the present United Nations institutions, agencies, and programmes. We fully agree that the panel should prepare recommendations for strengthening the institutional system, not at some distant time, but soon.

However, as the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz, has emphasized on several occasions and as we have already stated in the proposed Polish initiative of the New Political Act for the United Nations, is that the high-level panel should also deliberate on the question of a common political framework that would form a basis upon which the new institutional system could be built. The panel's work should not only focus on the reform of current organs and agencies, but should also embody a new reinforced basis for the United Nations mandate and delineate the functions of the United Nations.

In our opinion, the panel should concentrate part of its work on the creation of a new catalogue of universal values shared by the international community. This process should prove to be of utmost importance as a basis for further cooperation with the objective of benefiting all humanity. This catalogue should include the values already mentioned in the Millennium Declaration: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and mutual responsibility. They need, however, to be further evaluated and adjusted to present reality and broadened and clarified

to highlight their diverse aspects depending on the circumstances of the contemporary world. At the same time, the study of the question how to relate those values to the legal norms currently in force in the United Nations institutional system and how to make them more relevant to other contemporary problems, should also be undertaken by the panel.

We certainly expect that the report of the panel will provide a conceptual and holistic reflection on the nature of the changes in the international system and a vision of a more effective international order. The report should, in our opinion, contain answers to questions posed by present challenges, including security risks related to globalization and non-State actors, development gaps, international solidarity and good governance.

We hope that the United Nations of the twenty-first century will remain an organization of nation States responding to its Members' concerns and needs and fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people of the world, whom it was created to serve. We cannot build a world without a strong commitment to act together through the United Nations. It is only our actions that will define the place and the role of the United Nations in the international arena. On behalf of Poland, I can assure you that we will actively cooperate to achieve this goal.

Mr. Mekdad (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the reports he has submitted and which are now being considered by the General Assembly. My delegation would also like to support the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). We would also like to concur with the statement made by the representative of Morocco speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

These reports should be seen in the broader context of the reform of our Organization, which for sixty years now has proved its relevance and effectiveness. It is also true, logical and normal that there are some aspects of this Organization that have to be reconsidered and addressed at the appropriate time. This involves work on advancing and consolidating the concepts and principles of the founding fathers, which are our cultural heritage.

The philosophy of the reform should be based on an essential concept, namely that reform is a means rather than an end in itself. That being so, the Syrian delegation, like other delegations, is convinced that strengthening the United Nations as an international body for deliberations should be an essential goal of reform. We welcome the constructive initiatives taken by the Secretary-General in order to achieve this objective. Although some of those proposals will need in-depth consideration, his sincere efforts are commendable and much appreciated. We must change the structures of the United Nations by reforming its main bodies. We must, in particular, reform the Security Council either by expanding it or by revising its procedures to ensure that it is a democratic body that reflects faithfully the will of the international community. Reform should also be aimed at enabling the General Assembly to play its central role, which is so vital in the international arena because the Assembly is the most appropriate forum for deliberations and the soundest of decision-making centres. Therefore, we must develop mechanisms to implement the resolutions of the General Assembly, since these truly reflect the will of the international community.

The General Assembly should also play its leading role as the supreme international legislative body. In that connection, we reaffirm that all Assembly resolutions are valid and relevant and deserve to be implemented. We should not allow people to refer to the Assembly's resolutions and agenda as obsolete or meaningless. We should revitalize and implement those resolutions as a way to strengthen the legitimacy of this Organization and as a sound step towards reforming and revitalizing it. This requires the sincere and attentive political will of all Member States.

United Nations activities have increased over the past few years. This relates directly to the increase in membership. But the Organization's working methods have not developed at the same pace and have not adapted to the growing agenda and membership. That is true also of the Main Committees and subsidiary committees, which means that the task facing Member States is too great. In that connection, we wish to emphasize particularly the system of allocating agenda items to the Main Committees. We take note of the Secretary-General's proposals regarding the scheduling, planning and budgeting cycles.

My delegation believes that reform should be thorough and should include all aspects of budget formulation. This process should strengthen the role of the deliberative bodies and enable them to consider all

relevant elements in order to strengthen the sovereignty of all Member States and promote their common interests. In that connection, we wish to refer to the medium-term plan as a strategic programming document that contains the operational priorities of the Organization. We wonder if it would be possible to incorporate this strategic tool into the budgetary process. Every budget cycle should take into account the mandate of the United Nations.

We also emphasize the need to provide the necessary funding for all United Nations legislative activities that stem from its resolutions and from international conferences. Lack of funding should not be used as a pretext for not implementing those resolutions that are very important to developing countries. We also emphasize that it is important for the budget to be geared towards the implementation of programmes. It is clear that those activities need to be greatly improved. The Syrian delegation agrees fully that it is essential to consider in depth all aspects of the budgetary process in order to take into account the views of all countries and regional groups.

We need a clearer explanation of the shortened medium-term plan and its linkage with the programming and budgetary process, as well as the review of the role of the Committee on Programme and Coordination, because we do not have the information we need to make an informed decision at this stage. We believe that no decision should be made until we have examined all the relevant data. Any hastiness in this regard would be counterproductive, since the most important element of reform is in-depth analysis of all ideas that are put forward.

My delegation assures members of our desire to contribute effectively to all deliberations on these items. We are a member of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and of the Group of 77 and China, and we were among the first to advocate reform so that the Organization could play its vital, leading role. We appeal to all our partners and to all Member States to take these ideas into consideration so that we can move ahead and achieve reform that will be in the interest of all.

Mr. Trautwein (Germany): Germany aligns itself with the statement of the presidency of the European Union and would like to add the following thoughts.

Germany welcomes fully the reform initiative undertaken by the Secretary-General. As the Secretary-General put it (see A/58/PV.7), we do not have to choose. The United Nations must confront threats and challenges — new and old, "hard" and "soft". It must be fully engaged in the struggle for development and poverty eradication, in the common struggle to protect our common environment and in the struggle for human rights, democracy and good governance.

Recent developments teach us that the "hard" threats, such as terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, are real and cannot be separated from problems like extreme poverty and gross violations of human rights. Terrorism is not a problem just for rich countries. Since this Organization was founded, States have generally had the opportunity to deal with threats to peace through containment and deterrence, through a system based on collective security and the Charter.

We have to face up to the concerns that make some States feel uniquely vulnerable, since it is those concerns that drive them to take unilateral action. We must show that those concerns can, and will, be addressed effectively through collective action.

In this context, the Secretary-General speaks of a fork in the road and a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the United Nations was founded. Germany shares that view. We should not shy away from questions about the adequacy and effectiveness of the rules and instruments at our disposal. Among those instruments, none is more important for the maintenance of peace and security than the Security Council. In his recent report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323), the Secretary-General drew attention to the urgent need for the Council to regain the confidence of States and of world public opinion, both by demonstrating its ability to deal effectively with the most difficult issues and by becoming more broadly representative of the international community as a whole, as well as of today's geopolitical realities.

The Council of the future will have to find answers with regard to the pre-emptive use of force against perceived threats, with regard to possible criteria for early authorizations of coercive measures and with regard to the best way to respond to threats of genocide or other comparable massive violations of human rights.

The question of the composition of the Council has been on the agenda of the Assembly for over a decade. Virtually all Member States agree that the

Council should be enlarged. The German Chancellor reaffirmed that position in his statement before the Assembly on 25 September.

The Security Council is not the only institution that needs strengthening. The Secretariat will have to find ways to work even more effectively; the Assembly itself needs to be strengthened; the role of the Economic and Social Council, and the role of the United Nations as a whole in economic and social affairs, including its relationship with the Bretton Woods institutions, need to be rethought and reinvigorated; and, finally, the role of the Trusteeship Council should be reviewed. This is all clearly reflected in the EU statement.

Germany looks forward to the findings of the high-level panel of eminent personalities, which, we are sure, will be a vital and important guide for us in the areas of current challenges to peace and security; the contribution which collective action can make in addressing these challenges; the review of the functioning of the major organs of the United Nations; and ways of strengthening the United Nations through reform of its institutions and processes. Germany, together with its partners, will support this process and the implementation of its results.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): Allow me to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report on the strengthening of the United Nations (A/57/59) and to express support for the proposals contained therein.

The Eritrean delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. However, I wish to make some additional observations on certain issues.

My delegation also welcomes Secretary-General Kofi Annan's decision to create a high-level panel of eminent personalities which would make recommendations that would enhance our Organization's capacity to face the realities of the new century.

I must also seize this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for your commitment to the strengthening of the United Nations system and for the proposals contained in the non-paper you issued.

The proposal for the strengthening, and thus the reform, of the United Nations comes during a period of transition which witnessed the end of the cold war and the advent of globalization, with their attendant consequences. It also comes at an auspicious time, when an overwhelming number of Member States, as well as global civil society, seem to be committed to the establishment of an international order free of fear and want and to have created a solid consensus which recognizes the interconnectedness of security — that is, human security — human development and human rights. It also comes at a time of hope and reflects a sense of optimism that the United Nations remains the only institution that can protect and promote security, development and the rule of law.

Yet there are some challenges to be overcome. Among them are the crisis of multilateralism, if only because some members no longer seem to have faith in the United Nations, citing its inability quickly to adapt to new realities and an identity crisis that is rooted in what the United Nations can and cannot do.

In spite of this, however, there is general consensus that the United Nations has become humanity's indispensable institution. This has been confirmed by recent events and by the Organization's proud record in the avoidance of global war, the development and refinement of international law, peacekeeping and peacemaking, the defence of human rights, and, above all, decolonization. It has also demonstrated the usefulness of collective action on such global issues as the environment, population, HIV/AIDS, terrorism and other issues of common concern to humankind.

On the other hand, the United Nations needs to be strengthened if it is credibly to meet the demands and expectations of a fast-changing world. It has become obvious that the United Nations and its allied organizations can no longer accomplish their missions on the basis of the vision of a bygone international order and of their existing mandates and structures. It is thus imperative to dream up a new vision, to recast the mandate and to upgrade the structure of the Organization if it is to become an efficient and meaningful instrument for global peace and development in the new world order.

The United Nations Charter is a magnificent document, and many of the current challenges and problems facing the world can be met or resolved by

faithfully adhering to its values, norms and principles, and by revitalizing old institutions and mechanisms on the basis of its provisions. Yet there will also have to be some additions, to respond to new realities.

To that end, Member States must be ready to accept new realities, including globalization; new hopes and expectations on the part of peoples — all peoples — of seeing the elimination of weapons of mass destruction; new responsibilities relative to the eradication of poverty, famine and plagues of biblical proportions; the speedy elimination of terrorism; the desire of citizens to master their destinies; and the need to adopt new paradigms, including, in particular, those related to security and development, the relationship between societies as well as within societies, and the relationship of human beings to their environment.

The Millennium Declaration is the document that contains the essential conditions which buttress and uphold the Charter and, by enunciating clearly our commitment to strengthen, and thereby ensure the continued relevance of, our organization; identifying humanity's common concerns; forging common goals and objectives; refining old, and formulating new principles, norms and values; defining our priorities; and establishing a cooperative programme of action, it will enable us boldly to face the complex new realities.

In fulfilment of the Millennium Declaration's message of goodwill and cooperation for mutual benefit, the Organization must be able to function as an independent, truly universal and pluralist agent and facilitate the sharing of experiences and ideas, promote tolerance and mutual understanding through dialogue among civilizations, countries and peoples, and propose varied policy options to guide the international community during these early days of the new order.

The Organization can execute its mandate faithfully, credibly and effectively if its institutions are empowered and enabled to operate smoothly on the basis of the tasks and duties allocated to them by the Charter and, now, the Millennium Declaration, with some essential changes made to correct past mistakes and to respond to the exigencies of the times.

There is no denying that, in spite of the hollow myth of an "automatic majority" of Third World countries controlling the affairs of the United Nations, it is, in fact, the major Powers of the developed countries which are in control of the operations of the Organization. It is clear that the present distribution of power and influence is counterproductive. It is therefore urgent that a new system, based on the provisions of the Charter but reflecting the general and specific responsibilities of countries, be created to break old patterns, correct imbalances and restore old powers. In effect, the United Nations must be democratized.

In this connection, the General Assembly — the main deliberative organ of the United Nations, in which the principle of one State, one vote is operational — must be revitalized by restoring the powers and functions bestowed on it by the Charter. In this connection, the Eritrean delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made by those delegations which consider it essential to further strengthen the office of the President of the General Assembly.

The Security Council has made praiseworthy improvements in its working methods. However, the call for greater transparency and accountability has yet to elicit any meaningful response. The Eritrean delegation is also convinced that the expansion of the membership of the Council is essential if the Council is to reflect the reality governing current international relations and to make it more representative. The revitalization of the Economic and Social Council is also essential in view of the current organizational weakness in the area of economic and social affairs.

The Eritrean delegation recognizes that public opinion plays an essential role in the strengthening of the United Nations. Accordingly, my delegation notes with thanks the proposals submitted by the Secretary-General to redefine the functions of the Department of Public Information.

I would like to conclude by declaring that, in spite of the bitter experience and memory of Eritreans, the State of Eritrea recognizes that the United Nations is humanity's beacon of hope for a safer and better world because, on the one hand, it symbolizes justice, fairness, the rule of law and "best practice" State behaviour, while, on the other, it is now certain that, without the United Nations, no country, including the mighty, can achieve the global public good of peace, prosperity, sustainable development and good governance. Eritrea is therefore committed to the strengthening of the United Nations and hopes that its faith and commitment are not misplaced.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): The reports before us follow upon document A/57/786, submitted last year by the Secretary-General, entitled "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change" — a document that was nothing less than extraordinary. It was concise, candid and constructive. It was a work that embodied the spirit of the agenda itself, calling for fewer reports, richer in content and shorter in length.

Now that the Secretary-General's vision is moving into the implementation stage, I would like to comment on four specific aspects of the programme that are of particular interest to my delegation.

First, regarding the work of this body, the General Assembly, the Secretary-General has suggested the combining of duplicative discussions and the reduction of recurring agenda items. My delegation has frequently lamented the automatic annual rehash of resolutions without regard for the relevance of their content or the efficiency of their treatment. A reduction in the number of overlapping resolutions could be achieved by simply merging and editing draft texts, thus creating important savings in time, money and paperwork. The pattern of recurring agenda items is particularly annoying and wasteful. We support the Secretary-General's call for a rigorous review of this practice and his suggestion that many issues no longer be addressed annually. We also take note with satisfaction of the beginnings of the implementation of this suggestion, in the form of a growing number of joint debates. Yet even more needs to be done.

Secondly, the Secretary-General's call for realigned priorities, including a focus on technology-based development solutions; water issues; the promotion of good governance as the foundation for peace; and the strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations to fight terrorism — these are goals that seem to my delegation to be right on target. From our perspective, those four priorities constitute the building blocks for regional reconciliation and provide a promise of cooperation, development and prosperity for all peace-loving peoples.

Thirdly, in his report, the Secretary-General observes that the Department of Public Information has suffered from a fragmentation of its efforts as a result of too many mandates and missions. Our delegation could not agree more with that statement. The valuable resources of this Organization have been squandered on unnecessary and partial information efforts, perpetuated by partisan political perspectives. It is hoped that the new operating model for the Department for Public Information proposed by the Secretary-General will resolve this wasteful and counterproductive phenomenon.

Lastly, the Secretary-General has called for the establishment of a panel to review the relationship between the United Nations and civil society and to offer practical recommendations for approved modalities of interaction. The effort to bring about improved engagement with civil society, based on procedures and policies that reflect greater coherence, consistency and predictability, is indeed welcome. The terms and conditions governing the accreditation and participation of non-governmental organizations in United Nations conferences should indeed be reviewed and improved, in order to, among other things, protect the focus of this Organization from being appropriated by hidden agendas.

In conclusion, we sincerely welcome the efforts begun to faithfully implement the groundbreaking report of the Secretary-General and hope that they remain focused and on target. We stand ready to assist you, Mr. President, in your efforts to turn this vision into a reality.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on these items.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.47

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

47th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 29 October 2003, at 10 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 104

Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development

(b) High-level dialogue for the implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/58/216 and A/58/323)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/58/436)

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/58/3, Parts I-II)

Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council and notes by the Secretariat (A/58/77, A/58/77/Add.1 and A/58/77/Add.2)

Conference Room Paper (A/58/CRP.2)

The President: A little more than one and-a-half years since we adopted the Monterrey Consensus at the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, we have come, as agreed, to comprehensively review our progress, both substantially and institutionally, in meeting commitments made.

Today, I am pleased to formally open this High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, the mechanism agreed to the follow-up to Monterrey. The purpose of this short meeting of the Plenary is to permit us to adopt our Programme of Work and to address other organizational matters. I consider it opportune, nevertheless, to emphasize the importance of the initiative in which we will engage over these two days. It is pertinently captured in the theme for the High-level Dialogue, "The Monterrey Consensus: status of implementation and tasks ahead". This theme takes into account commitments made at Monterrey to advance the development agenda by setting and implementing internationally agreed development goals. It also takes into account the essential need to maintain a balance sheet of the progress we have made to permit us to systematically and strategically plan for further effective action.

The financing for development agenda is a comprehensive one, encompassing trade, official development aid, debt relief, domestic resource mobilization, other private flows, institutional issues and partnerships. It is essential, therefore, that our two days of deliberations are equally as comprehensive, and take into account the totality of commitments made at Monterrey. The framework of the High-level Dialogue permits us to take this comprehensive approach. All those who were part of the broad coalition established at Monterrey are also part of this High-level Dialogue — Governments, major stakeholders, other intergovernmental organizations, civil society, and the business sector. Although,

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regrettably, schedules of the heads of the major stakeholders did not permit all to participate, as was expected in the documents established at the High-level Dialogue. I am confident that their senior representatives will appropriately represent the contribution of the stakeholders.

I take the opportunity to welcome Ministers and all participants to this High-level Dialogue. I express my appreciation to the co-chairs of the round tables that will be convened today. Importantly, I urge all Permanent Representatives to participate to the fullest extent possible in these two days of deliberations. Our collective effort is critical to the successful outcome we all expect from this High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development.

Turning to the matters at hand, the General Assembly will now begin its High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, held under sub-item (b) of agenda item 104 and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/250 of 20 December 2002 and the letters from the Presidents of the General Assembly dated 7 May 2003 and 6 October 2003.

As representatives will recall, the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development will consist of the following: this plenary meeting, to formally open the High-level Dialogue; four round tables, to be held this morning, immediately following the adjournment of this plenary meeting, in the Economic and Social Council Chamber and in Conference Rooms 5, 6, and 7, respectively, and with themes as announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*; four round tables, to be held this afternoon, in Conference Rooms 5, 6, 7 and the Economic and Social Council Chamber, respectively, and with themes as announced in the *Journal of the United Nations*; a plenary meeting at 9.30 a.m. on Thursday, 30 October 2003, in the General Assembly Hall, to hear statements by the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President of the Economic and Social Council, representatives of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Also speaking will be the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, as Chairman of the United Nations Development Group, as well as a representative of the regional development banks and a representative of the regional commissions.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind those who will be taking the floor on Thursday that there is a time-limit of 5 minutes for each statement.

In addition, an informal interactive dialogue will take place in Conference Room 4, immediately following the adjournment of the plenary meeting of Thursday, 30 October 2003. This will continue in the afternoon until 6 p.m.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage representatives taking the floor in the informal interactive dialogue not to read prepared statements.

Finally, there will be a plenary meeting, to be held at 6 p.m. on Thursday, 30 October, immediately following the conclusion of the informal interactive dialogue, to hear a concluding statement by me, and to formally close the High-level Dialogue.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.48

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-eighth session

48th plenary meeting
Thursday, 30 October 2003, 9.30 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.40 a.m.

Agenda item 104 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development

(b) High-level dialogue for the implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/58/216 and A/58/323)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/58/436)

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/58/3, Parts I-II)

Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council and notes by the Secretariat (A/58/77 and Add.1 and Add.2)

Conference Room Paper (A/58/CRP.2)

The President: The Monterrey Consensus, adopted by the International Conference on Financing for Development reflects the critical decisions we took at the highest political level to address the challenges of financing for development around the world, particularly in developing countries. It also lays out the objectives we set for this purpose.

Monterrey's distinctive approach of bringing together all the parties involved in the financing for development process has made it possible for key cross-sectoral issues in trade, finance and development to be addressed comprehensively. The Consensus has been widely acclaimed as a new and workable approach to development financing, and an important guide for joint action at the national, regional, international and systemic levels in this critical area. That accounts for the commitments made and the priority pledged for implementation of the courses of action of the Consensus.

At Monterrey, we ensured that implementation and follow-up of such a key document as the Consensus would not be left to chance. We must now begin our biennial process of assessment and forward planning in the area of financing for development at this two-day High-level Dialogue. Our theme, "The Monterrey Consensus: status of implementation and tasks ahead", gives us clear direction on what is expected of us.

We have worked well in this follow-up process. Reports are that all of yesterday's ministerial round tables dealt forthrightly, frankly and effectively with the issues at hand. I commend all the round-table participants. Civil society and business sector panels also had productive sessions on 27 October. Undoubtedly, those prior deliberations will inform our discussions here today.

I believe that pragmatism must now inform our high-level segment so that we may realistically assess

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both the progress we have made and the urgency with which we must proceed with the tasks ahead. By any yardstick, our assessment report is a mixed one. On the positive — and, I must say, commendable — side, we saw an increase of some 4.8 per cent in development assistance immediately following the Monterrey Conference. Some donor countries have reached the United Nations official development assistance goal of 0.7 per cent and have committed to reaching 1 per cent during the period 2005 to 2006. Others have set time frames — for example, 2012 — to reach 0.7 per cent. The European Union has decided to collectively raise official development assistance levels to 0.39 per cent of gross national income by 2006 as a first step towards the 0.7 per cent United Nations goal. There are also promising signs that other countries may increase their official development assistance but may still fall short of the 0.7 per cent target. In that regard, it is interesting to note that it is among the same group of countries that usually fund development activities that pledges are being made for significant increases in official development assistance.

There are nascent and encouraging signs pointing towards the resolution of the debt crisis, with ideas such as a comprehensive, statutory approach to restructuring the external debt of Governments and the use of collective-action clauses now being discussed.

For their part, many developing countries and countries with economies in transition are working towards creating an enabling environment at the national level by strengthening economic governance and enhancing democratic participation, as called for in the Monterrey Consensus.

Overall, however, the other side of our report card has not been encouraging. Net private financial flows to a significant number of developing countries have declined or are negative. There is little change with respect to challenges such as lack of market access, special and differential treatment, debt, the deteriorating situation of commodity-dependent countries, protectionism and agricultural subsidies, and the lack of participation by developing countries in the decision-making of international financial institutions. Further, much more needs to be done to reach the additional $50 billion in official development assistance needed annually to meet the Millennium Development Goals. The failure to make tangible progress in trade relations at Cancún put us no closer to our quest for a level playing field and enhanced opportunities for developing countries.

In some instances, special circumstances have hampered progress in meeting the objectives of the Monterrey Consensus. Civil strife and military conflict, for example, are hindering development in a number of the most vulnerable countries and populations. Basic health care also remains alarmingly inadequate in a large number of countries.

In this high-level segment of our Dialogue, we should openly and frankly discuss all the issues that present a challenge to the successful implementation of commitments and agreements reached at Monterrey, be they at the national, international or systemic level. If we are to effectively use it, we must be forthright in asking ourselves pertinent questions in order to arrive at pertinent responses.

For example, is the United Nations system positioned to have an adequate impact on the development funding process? Have sufficient steps been taken towards improving coherency and efficiency among donor agencies? Regarding partnerships, have sufficient efforts been made to engage civil society and the private sector both nationally and internationally? And, with respect to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, what should be their role in tracking progress made and in proposing further steps aimed at implementing the commitments and agreements made at Monterrey?

I pose those questions because I believe that the answers are of central importance to our tasks ahead. I also pose them in the hope that they will assist us in identifying some of the pertinent issues we must take up and address in our interactive discourse so that we may move decisively forward and effectively implement the Monterrey Consensus.

I now call on Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General: One stark fact should be on our minds throughout this timely Dialogue: in 2002, for the sixth consecutive year, developing countries made a net transfer of resources to other countries. Moreover, last year's was the largest such negative resource transfer ever: $200 billion. We have just heard the President speak about this issue.

Of course, this is a complex question. Aggregate numbers can mask varied performance, and there is some good news here and there. But, even taking all subtlety and nuance into account, the overall result defies common sense. Funds should be moving from developed countries to developing countries, but these numbers tell us the opposite is happening. Funds that should be promoting investment and growth in developing countries, or building schools and hospitals, or sponsoring other steps towards the Millennium Development Goals, are instead being transferred abroad. Despite promising investment opportunities in the developing world and improved economic policies, fear and uncertainty are keeping resources from being deployed where they are most needed.

If what we say about financing for development is not to ring hollow, if financing for development means anything, we must reverse this negative balance sheet and fix the system so that all countries, and all people — especially the poorest — can benefit.

That is the goal that brought us all together in Monterrey last year. Given the dramatic events we have lived through since then — from the war in Iraq and its aftermath to the setback in trade negotiations at Cancún — the Conference might seem a world away. Therefore, it strikes me as useful, amidst the current global divisions, to recall some of the spirit that prevailed just 18 months ago.

Certainly, Monterrey was not free of tension and disagreement, but we did achieve real breakthroughs there. The one most people remember concerned official development assistance: new commitments made in Monterrey reversed a troubling and devastating decade of decline or stagnation. But let us not forget Monterrey's other messages.

First, the process broke new ground in bringing together, under the umbrella of the United Nations, all the relevant stakeholders — not the least of which were different ministries within the same Government — to improve policy coherence.

Secondly, Monterrey cemented a view of poor people and poor countries as partners in the development process, as untapped reservoirs of initiative, not objects of pity.

And thirdly, perhaps most important of all, both developed and developing countries acknowledged their mutual responsibilities and mutual accountability, a welcome departure from the polarizing practice of pointing at what others are not doing.

The result was a new approach to dealing with issues of development finance, an approach we must sustain. My report on implementation of the commitments and agreements made at Monterrey (A/58/216) was issued several weeks ago. I hope you are ready to improve on what is very much a mixed report card.

While official development assistance has increased, it is still far short of what is required to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

We have all seen what trade can do to create jobs and wealth, but we also know how subsidies and tariffs are stifling the ability of poor countries to compete fairly in the international trading system and trade their way out of poverty. Foreign direct investment in the developing world, already concentrated in fewer than a dozen countries, is down. Too many developing countries continue to carry too much debt, making it clear that the assumptions behind the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative were in many ways overly optimistic and suggesting the need for an international framework for debt restructuring.

Too many remain vulnerable to swings in commodity and financial markets, underscoring the need to strengthen the international financial architecture. And too many remain excluded from meaningful participation in the decision-making processes of key international bodies on economic, financial and trade issues — a democratic deficit that undermines confidence and impedes progress.

There is no shortage of urgent work ahead in each of these areas, and I have made recommendations to help point the way forward. I have also called for steps to help us get more out of the annual spring meeting among the Economic and Social Council, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO). That meeting needs better and more focused preparation if it is to fulfil the special role given to it by the Monterrey Consensus as a guardian of coherence, coordination and cooperation.

Ultimately, progress depends on leadership, leadership that can overcome domestic constraints, that recognizes the deeply fused fates of the world's peoples and that is committed to multilateralism as the pragmatic path to shared prosperity.

We are here again in one room — ministers and senior officials of Governments and multilateral institutions responsible for finance, trade, foreign affairs and development cooperation, along with representatives of civil society and the private sector and other key stakeholders. We face an uncertain economy, wide-ranging social distress and faltering trade negotiations, which need a real jump-start at December's WTO talks in Geneva. We must stay together, stay engaged, and make this process work.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Gert Rosenthal, President of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Rosenthal (President of the Economic and Social Council) (*spoke in Spanish*): This is an important event and I am very happy to be participating here in my capacity as President of the Economic and Social Council.

This event is important because I am convinced that the International Conference on Financing for Development was the single most significant contribution that the United Nations has made, throughout its history, to the development effort. Only the United Nations, with a little help from its friends, would have been able to convene a meeting attracting so many heads of State or Government with a view to placing development at the highest level of the international agenda. And perhaps only a United Nations conference could have produced a road map for development that was as lucid as the one contained in the Monterrey Consensus, built on the foundation of the Millennium Declaration.

Not only was great impetus given to development on the international agenda but the Consensus went far beyond rhetoric in indicating the tasks to be carried out, who should carry them out, how the responsibility of each country should interact with the responsibility of the international community and how we should organize ourselves with a view to the Consensus' relevant implementation. The emphasis on relationships — between Governments and civil societies, between the United Nations and the main multilateral organizations and between ministries for foreign affairs and their colleagues in the economic ministries — is imbued with the spirit promoted by our Charter. The Monterrey Consensus clearly offers guidance for those formulating policy at the national and international levels and establishes a follow-up mechanism. It is precisely this mechanism that we are now seeking to perfect.

It may be recalled that paragraph 69 of the Monterrey Consensus establishes the necessary elements for monitoring and follow-up activities. The Economic and Social Council held its first post-Monterrey spring meeting last 14 April with promising results. You will find my report on this meeting issued as document A/58/77 of 9 May 2003. The general thrust of our dialogue, as befits the mandate of the Economic and Social Council, was to increase coherence, cooperation and coordination of all stakeholders for the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. Another way of describing this thrust is to define who does what and how to work together. We had a fruitful dialogue, both at the level of our respective intergovernmental representatives and between our respective secretariats and staff. A notable innovation in the spring meeting was the presence, for the first time, of an intergovernmental representation of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

We note that, as in all complex processes, we have experienced progress and also setbacks. Certainly, the results of the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Cancún fall into the latter category, but we must persist. If we work together, we will prevail. I am sure that I represent the feeling of all member countries of the Economic and Social Council when I pledge that, for our part, we will do all in our power to play the role assigned to us in the Monterrey Consensus, including the possibility, when road blocks appear, to help illuminate the way forward.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank.

Mr. Wolfensohn (World Bank): This, for the World Bank, is an historic occasion because I believe it is the first time that the President of the World Bank has addressed the General Assembly on any subject. It is, of course, significant that we should be together on the subject of financing for development, a subject that unites us and a subject on which the partnership that we have is being tested and proven each day. We are particularly glad to be here, and I am delighted to be here in the presence of the Secretary-General, whose leadership in these matters is so important and so crucial to the approach for a better world, for a peaceful world and for a world in which development can take place.

As we review the results of the Monterrey agenda to date, we can look at, as the Secretary-General just said, the consensus that was reached in Monterrey and we can address where we have progressed in terms of the work of both the developed and the developing countries in their undertakings given at Monterrey.

Let me say by way of early observation that we are enriched in the way in which we can address how far we have gone on development by the various meetings that have been held by this body beyond Monterrey — the work on environment, the work on gender and the work on social issues — all of which have given us an agenda in the international financial institutions that is enriched by the observations of this body and its partners.

Coming to the question of where we are, we have to address rather simply the undertakings that were given by the developed and the developing countries. The developed countries indicated that they would follow the actions of the developing countries. If the developing countries addressed the questions of strengthening capacity, strengthening the legal, judicial and financial systems, and fighting corruption, all of which were undertakings that were given in Monterrey and reaffirmed, in the case of Africa, in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), in return, the wealthy countries indicated that they would assist in capacity-building, provide additional development assistance and open their markets for trade.

Some progress has in fact been made on both sides. The countries that are developing have indeed taken steps in terms of strengthening governance, of building their infrastructure of legal and financial systems and, to a degree, of fighting corruption. But I think that it is not unfair to say that there is still much to be done. As I commented in my annual meeting address, there are really no secrets in the countries represented here. Everyone knows the steps that need to be taken, and the issue is to take action. Everyone knows where the gaps are in structure and where those that are corrupt are to be found, but it is difficult to move forward. Nevertheless, it is essential to do so, if the aims of Monterrey are to be met. The incentive is the creation of a better world and of better opportunities, the pursuit of which need to be supported by the wealthy countries.

Progress here has at best been mixed. Yes, we have seen and are delighted by and grateful for the $18 billion of additional funding that has been promised over the next three years. Yes, we have seen discussions taking place on openness of trade, but, again, it is fair to say that with the problems of Cancún and with the reassessment of financial needs, a response to the questions raised in the follow-up to Monterrey is something that needs further and significant attention. We, in our institution, are concerned over the imbalance that exists in terms of the allocation of resources and the allocation of interest on the development process — allocations that see us spending $800 billion on defence and $56 billion on development assistance — and which see, in terms of the movements of people around the world, $80 billion now in remittances for migrant workers overseas dwarfing the development assistance that is coming from the developed countries.

It is not a question of a lack of good will nor of a lack of intent. We have seen good progress and leadership on the part of our colleagues in the United States and the European Union. But if, indeed, we are to address the questions of success in the Monterrey agenda, then it is necessary for each of us to improve our game — developed countries, developing countries and international institutions. We are looking at ourselves, at the ways in which we can increase our effectiveness and can build a more coordinated effort and follow-up to the Rome agenda.

I am delighted that within the last couple of weeks, I have had a highly constructive meeting with the local representatives of the United Nations Development Programme. I want to assure everyone in this Hall that the desire of our institution is to work intimately and closely with the United Nations system, because we believe that no results can be possible in terms of the Monterrey agenda, unless we work as partners, you and us together, with our friends in civil society and the private sector. I think there has been progress, but, I must say, I think there is very much to be done in today's environment.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Horst Köhler, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Köhler (International Monetary Fund): As we gather here, there is important good news. The global economic outlook is improving. Prospects for

recovery are strengthening in the advanced economies, led by developments in the United States. This is good news for emerging-market and developing-country economies, which have also benefited from a supportive financial market environment. But we know that risks remain. Chief among these risks is the excessive dependence of the world economy on growth in the United States and the resulting global current account imbalances. Resolving these imbalances in an orderly manner must be the primary objective of international economic policy. This requires a cooperative approach involving all major countries and regions. Such an approach must strengthen the domestic forces of growth, particularly in Europe and Japan, building on the new momentum for structural reform.

Sound and sustained global growth remains the single most important condition for making decisive progress in the fight against poverty. In the Millennium Development Goals, we now have measurable objectives. The two pillars of the Monterrey Consensus — reflected also in Africa's own New Partnership for Africa's Development — give us a common policy framework defining the responsibilities of the developing countries and of the international community in working towards those objectives.

With the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative processes, we have the operational vehicles to take us to the agreed goals. Those processes are under way and, in many countries, yielding results — albeit more slowly than many of us would like to see. Of course, there is surely room for improvement.

But, as we take stock, we must keep in mind the fact that progress must be achieved on the ground, in each individual country. This is the time for steadfast implementation, not for re-embarking on a search for new development strategies every six months.

The IMF will continue to play its role in implementing the Monterrey Consensus. In our work with low-income members, we are concentrating on our core areas of competence: helping them establish a framework for sound macro-economic policies and institutions, which is indispensable for sustained growth, investment and job creation. To that end, we have reduced the scope of our conditionality by focusing it on those areas that are central to achieving key macro-economic objectives. We are working hard to align better the PRSP, the national budget framework and our own low-income lending facility, the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility.

We are continuing to reinforce our technical assistance and training programmes aimed at building capacity and strong institutions in developing countries, including through our regional technical assistance centres in the Pacific, the Caribbean and, most recently, in East and West Africa. We are working on strengthening the ability of our low-income members to guard against exogenous shocks and to respond to them should they occur. Indeed, I had a very fruitful and open discussion with the "Big Table" of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, together with Jim Wolfensohn, just yesterday.

Looking ahead, we are engaged in a comprehensive consultation with our members, donors and civil society to guide us in our future work with low-income countries. I am really interested in this Dialogue, and I am going to listen. I hope everyone also listens to us. Our key objective is to ensure that our engagement complements that of other development partners in working towards our common goal: decisive progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals as a concrete contribution to the fight against poverty.

But the Monterrey Consensus extends beyond poverty alleviation. It is also about building a stronger international financial system that helps all countries reap the benefits of globalization. Over the past several years, the Fund has been engaged with the international community in an intensive process of reform, and I believe that we have made progress. We are focusing more on vulnerabilities in financial sectors and international capital markets. We are strengthening the framework of rules for the global economy, in collaboration with public- and private-sector institutions, by developing and implementing international standards and codes. We are continuing to examine ways to improve crisis management, and crisis resolution when crises do occur. With all due modesty, I think that we have, for example, made a positive contribution to developments in Brazil, for instance.

Overall, I believe that our work has contributed to the remarkable resilience of the international financial system in the face of the unprecedented shocks of the past three years. But the increasing interdependence of the world's economies continuously poses new challenges for our member countries and for the IMF. There is no room for complacency. Therefore, in our work, we must pay even more attention to the linkages between countries and regions, and exercise even-handedness, because crises can originate in mature markets as well as in emerging markets. Improving our ability to identify risks and vulnerabilities at an early stage, and our intensified work on domestic financial systems and international capital markets, must play a central role in that process. Let me add that I would be very pleased if we could develop an early-warning system also in terms of political developments and armed conflicts. We are always surprised by the outbreak of armed conflict, and I think that something has to change here.

The IMF's effectiveness as a cooperative institution depends on all members' having an appropriate voice and representation. That is agreed. With that objective, we in the IMF have recently taken several steps to bolster the capacity of the offices of Executive Directors from developing and transition countries aimed at enhancing their effective participation in policy formulation and in decision-making. The Executive Board will continue to examine the issues of quotas, representation and voice, and will report next April to our Governors, with whom responsibility for decisions lies.

More than ever before, our quest for global solutions to global problems requires cooperation for the global common good. The Monterrey Consensus is our joint policy framework in working towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In that effort, all developments partners need to do their part. We need to resist hypocrisy and accept our respective responsibilities. The advanced economies need to improve market access, reduce trade-distorting subsidies, and provide more — and better-coordinated — financial assistance. Developing countries need to stay the course in strengthening economic policies and good governance. There is still too much waste due to bad governance. Steadfast implementation and improvement is the key to decisive progress in our common fight against poverty, and the IMF stands ready to do its part.

The President: I now call on Mr. Francisco Thompson-Flores, Deputy Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Mr. Thompson-Flores (World Trade Organization): The greatest journeys begin not with the first step, but with the thought, "Where are we going?"

In 2000, at the dawn of the new millennium, global leaders assembled in this building to set a course to a more peaceful, prosperous and just world; a safer world; a world of less poverty, less hunger and greater opportunity in education; a healthier world that would sustain the generations to come.

Two years later, leaders gathered again — this time in Monterrey — to decide on the tools needed to facilitate our journey. We will arrive at our destination only if Governments act with courage and commitment and if the international community delivers on its promise to support their efforts. Mobilizing resources for development requires sound economic policies and good governance at the domestic level. It requires enabling environments for foreign investment. It requires aid and external debt relief. It also requires trade.

In this respect, it is now recorded history that in 2001 at Doha, Qatar, World Trade Organization (WTO) members agreed to launch a new round of multilateral trade negotiations, and further agreed that development issues and the concerns of developing countries should be at the heart of such negotiations.

The Doha Development Agenda negotiations are extensive. They cover implementation, agriculture, market access for non-agricultural products, services, intellectual property, WTO rules, dispute settlement and trade and the environment. New issues are also being contemplated: trade and investment, competition policy, Government procurement and trade facilitation — the so-called Singapore issues.

The negotiations are also ambitious. They are about locking in the tremendous gains of past rounds and making new gains. They are about improving trade conditions and market access, especially for poor countries. And they are about refining, clarifying and strengthening the rules that govern trading relations between States.

The link between trade, the Doha Development Agenda and the international community's wider agenda for development and poverty reduction is well established. Poor countries need to grow their way out of poverty, and while trade can serve as a key engine of that growth, currently the products of developing

countries face many obstacles in entering the markets of rich countries. Developing countries are further undercut by massive agricultural support in rich countries. Thus, a broad and balanced outcome of the Doha negotiations could make a huge contribution to the generation of resources for the financing of development.

To give perspective to this claim, according to one estimate from the World Bank, a successful Doha Round could raise global income by as much as $520 billion by 2015, more than two thirds of which will accrue to developing countries and help lift 144 million people out of poverty. We should contrast that figure with the $56 billion provided by rich countries each year in development assistance and relief to the heavily indebted poor countries, which is expected to amount to $40 billion in present value from all creditors.

That is, of course, just an estimate, and we could quibble about the figure. Nor do I want to understate the importance of aid and debt relief to developing countries; such support is vital and must continue and increase. But realizing the Millennium Development Goals will require an estimated $50 billion a year additional to current development assistance. Thus my basic message is this: if Governments put their minds to it, the Doha Round could bring huge benefits — benefits well beyond what can be delivered in any other area of international economic activity.

Recently, in Cancún, our trade negotiations suffered a setback. While a great deal of important work was done at that meeting, assembled ministers were unable to agree on a future agenda to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion by the agreed deadline of 1 January 2005. The meeting was ultimately drawn to a close on the final day when ministers failed to reach consensus on the launch of new negotiations on the Singapore issues.

Of course, as the dust has settled, we have seen, in abundance, analyses and interpretations of what happened. But members have to take collective responsibility for the outcome of the Cancún Ministerial Conference. I do not think it would be wise or accurate to put the blame on any one country or any one group of countries. Nor would it help us to move forward if we engaged in a lengthy, and ultimately useless, process of finger-pointing and recrimination.

Cancún was a disappointment, but it was not a collapse. The work programme is still in place, and WTO members are already exploring ways to move the process forward. The first logical step is to identify the areas of greatest difficulty in Cancún and get delegations discussing them again as quickly as possible — in other words, get people back to work.

That is exactly what the Director-General and the Chairman of the General Council are doing. Building on the mandate given to officials by ministers in Cancún to continue working on outstanding issues with a renewed sense of urgency and purpose, Mr. Supachai and Ambassador Castillo have secured agreement among the membership to undertake new consultations aimed at reinvigorating the process.

In these consultations, the focus is on the toughest issues: the Singapore issues, agriculture, the cotton initiative and market access for non-agricultural products. We are hopeful that good progress will be made by the time senior officials assemble in Geneva in mid-December.

Cancún has shown us, in a rather brutal fashion, that the Doha Development Agenda is extremely ambitious and complex. At the same time, by reaffirming all their Doha declarations and decisions, ministers have reminded us of the importance and relevance of those ambitions and of the fact that there is a great deal at stake in the negotiations.

We must also carry forward the lessons learned at Cancún and be cognizant of the new pressures evident at the meeting. Cancún saw the emergence of new groupings and countries banding together as never before to advance their common interests. These new alliances, and the simple truth of developing countries' increasing activism in the multilateral trading system, adds greatly to the complexity of our Doha undertaking. We must recognize the increased complexity and ensure it is adequately accommodated in our work programme.

At the same time, we welcome the surer voice that developing countries are finding in our negotiations, as well as the opportunity presented to ensure the round is comprehensive, in terms of both substance and participation.

We have a real chance to re-energize the Doha process by the end of the year. But success will hinge on the political will of all WTO members. Let us not

forget that our WTO members are, for the most part, the same Members of the United Nations that three years ago set the course to a new world by 2015. The determination that they show in our negotiations is part of a greater journey that is being made by, and on behalf of, humanity as a whole.

We can still reach the destination established by leaders at the Millennium Summit. But we will have to move apace. Half the world's people are still struggling to live on less than $2 a day. We must respond to their plight.

This High-level Dialogue is a chance to remind ourselves why we have set the course that we have set, and to recommit to this great journey.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Rubens Ricupero, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Mr. Ricupero (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development): The Monterrey Consensus was a holistic approach to the problems of financing for development. It provided a catalogue of the necessary factors to ensure financial support for sustained and sustainable growth. However, the Consensus did not provide a blueprint that guarantees economic growth and development. It was not a point of arrival, but a point of departure for an ongoing process — a work in progress that must keep abreast of rapid changes in the global economy.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is pleased to have participated in the process that produced the Secretary-General's report that we are considering, and we stand ready to continue our participation in areas where our contributions may prove useful.

The challenge that faces us today is, first, to make a clear distinction between the implementation of the commitments made at Monterrey and the follow-up of changes in areas in which the Consensus needs to be extended and amplified.

In assessing our progress, we should bear in mind that the impetus for a conference on financing for development originated in the negative net transfers of real resources sustained by many Latin American countries in the aftermath of the 1980s debt crisis — what has come to be called the "lost decade" of development. As the Secretary-General noted in his remarks, the net financial flows in the recent period are still from the developing world to the developed world. Indeed, this year — as the Secretary-General suggested — we will in all likelihood experience the seventh year of negative net flows of financial resources from developing to developed countries. That suggests that we may be in another "lost decade".

Unfortunately, some countries — such as Argentina and Bolivia — that were early in implementing the measures that were eventually included in the Consensus are now experiencing living standards far below those of the "lost decade" and find themselves excluded from external financing possibilities — not because of, but despite, the indispensable reforms that they adopted. It is encouraging that the International Monetary Fund has been able to agree to extend its existing support programme to the new Argentine Government, contributing to the programme for economic recovery. It is even more important for the international community to make a concerted and rapid effort in support of Bolivia in its current dire economic crisis if that country is to avoid the decline in domestic stability that Argentina and other Latin American countries have experienced and that could easily spread to further areas if that trend is not reversed.

The one relatively bright spot in financial flows for development is that flows of foreign direct investment have remained positive, despite the downturn in other flows. Nonetheless, they have declined substantially, despite the steps taken by developing countries in the aftermath of Monterrey to attract and absorb increased flows of foreign direct investment. That brings us back to the holistic nature of our discussions, for the decline in foreign direct investment flows appears in large part to be the result of the decline in global growth — particularly in the developed countries — and suggests a direct interrelationship between global demand and global financial flows. When investors are retrenching at home, their interest in foreign ventures tends to be reduced, irrespective of the domestic policies undertaken to attract foreign investment flows.

The same process appears to be at work in the factors determining the growth of global trade, which for some years has surpassed the growth of global incomes. As a result of the slowdown in global expansion, the growth in global trade has fallen, more or less in step with the decline in capital flows. That relationship is especially important for the prices of the

major export commodities of the most vulnerable least developed counties, as well as for a majority of landlocked economies and small island developing States. In that regard, I should like to draw the attention of Members to the summary of the recent General Assembly panel discussion on commodities, which the President of the General Assembly will transmit to the Second Committee.

Although it is true that it is global growth that will drive trade expansion — not the other way around — it is indispensable to resume the trade negotiations of the World Trade Organization from the point where they were interrupted in Cancún, in order to deliver — in time and at the right level of ambition — the development promises made in the Doha Declaration.

There is a very clear interrelationship between global growth and the growth of trade and finance, which the Consensus considers to be the basis for increased financial resources for developing countries. It is an area in which greater policy coordination and consistency could produce more general benefits. That would mean analysing national policies, in terms of not only their compatibility with goals aimed at domestic economic stability, but also their contribution to the stability of global growth.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has been persistent in pointing out the necessity of better policy coordination among the major industrialized countries in order to eliminate the major macroeconomic imbalances that are a major cause of volatility in exchange rates and international capital flows, impeding sustained financing flows to developing countries. As part of the partnership between developed and developing countries that produced the Monterrey Consensus, we all need to work harder to develop policies consistent with the dual goals of domestic and global stability.

The monitoring of the consistency of national policies with respect to employment growth was a mandate that was to be given to the Economic and Social Council more than 50 years ago under the Havana Charter, which, as the Assembly will recall, was the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment. But the Havana Charter was never implemented, and the Article IV surveillance provided for in the International Monetary Fund Articles of Agreement has tended to concentrate on the appropriateness of national policies for domestic stability rather than on their compatibility with global growth. Given the greater participatory and universal character of the United Nations process, this is indeed an area in which the Economic and Social Council — with the support of the Financing for Development Office — could provide an appropriate forum for the discussion of increased policy coherence, which could produce a global growth environment conducive to the attainment of the domestic policy objectives set for developing countries. Now that the international community is reflecting on the profound reforms called for by the Secretary-General, that could indeed represent a useful building block for the new international architecture that we all wish to see in the future.

The President: I now call on Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations Development Group.

Mr. Malloch Brown (United Nations Development Programme): It is a great pleasure to address this gathering and to share this platform with my colleagues from the international financial institutions, as well as my United Nations colleagues. This meeting shows that we recognize that this is a crucial time in our effort to mobilize the domestic and international financial resources needed to build a more just and equitable world.

Today, we must remember, the world is more unequal and more insecure than ever: we live in a world of 6 billion people, 1 billion of whom own 80 per cent of global wealth, while another billion struggle to survive on less than a dollar a day. It is that inequality that confronts us as policy makers and as human beings with consciences, particularly so because poverty on this scale is no longer inevitable; it does not have to be. Unlike generations past, we now possess the global means, the know-how and the record of development success to achieve the Millennium Development Goals agreed by all 189 Member States at the United Nations Millennium Summit: to halve poverty, remove hunger, put every boy and girl in school and stem the current health and environmental crises by 2015.

But while we have the global means, the political will can be much more erratic. Last week in Madrid we saw an extraordinary expression of political will in the

fund-raising commitment to assist the people of Iraq. I observed at that meeting that if we could consistently apply that same will, with the same urgency and focus, to the continuing needs of poor countries, then we could put in place the resources and the policy reforms in the North and the South to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

The Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development signalled a unique moment: a new political consensus was forged on how to finance development and resolve the extremes of poverty we have now. A global deal was struck, built around a partnership where sustained political and economic reform, more private investment and better governance by developing countries is matched by direct support from the developed world in the form of trade, aid and investment.

Following Monterrey, the nearly decade-long decline in official development assistance was reversed, rising from $52 billion in 2001 to $57 billion in 2002. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development calculations show pledges of an additional $16 billion by 2006, including a number of new aid arrangements, such as the Millennium Challenge Account proposed by the United States. However, even if the commitments made at Monterrey are fulfilled, and I am increasingly doubtful that we will meet the 2006 target, the total will still fall short of the Millennium Development Goals' requirement of $100 billion a year — a calculation made by former President Zedillo of Mexico and former Secretary of the United States Treasury Bob Rubin.

Even assuming developing countries raise domestic resources, pursue good macroeconomic policies and tackle corruption, the other half of the bargain — increased international resources for development — is not yet in place. Key to the commitments made at Monterrey was the consensus on the importance of country ownership, reflected in nationally owned development strategies backed by international support.

The United Nations system, under the overall coordination of the United Nations Development Group, which I chair, has worked hard to implement the Monterrey Consensus. We have made a major push to provide concrete, coordinated country assistance clearly aligned behind the Millennium Development Goals. We are also working closely with the World Bank to integrate those Goals into nationally owned poverty reduction strategy papers. Strategy papers driven by the Millennium Development Goals will generate the kind of pro-poor economic strategies that all of us in the United Nations and in the international financial institutions want to see.

The United Nations Development Group is also following up on the commitments made at the High-level Forum on Harmonization, held in Rome in February of this year, to streamline donor procedures and practices based on the principle of full country ownership, which also has a vital role to play in implementing the Monterrey Consensus and achieving an outcome-oriented development cooperation policy.

But the success or failure of the entire vision of Monterrey depends fundamentally on a larger vision of global partnership. The Millennium Development Goals may be the ultimate bottom-up approach to development with their clear focus on the pocketbook, people-centred issues of health, education and a sustainable environment; but they are also part of a global vision that sets out a mutual commitment to progress, struck at the highest political levels, between developed and developing countries.

No matter how successful and focused on the Millennium Development Goals the reform undertaken by developing countries, no matter how coordinated the support of development agencies and civil society, the first seven Goals will simply not be achieved if donors do not also do their part on Goal 8. Development assistance, investment and, as we have already heard today, trade, are all of crucial importance to developing countries. Indeed, the failure at Cancún to agree on the policies needed to create a pro-poor, legitimate, global trade strategy that the Doha Development Agenda was committed to achieving was a disappointing step backwards in terms of implementing the commitments made at Monterrey. I listened carefully to what my colleague from the World Trade Organization had to say and hope that this can be reversed.

We must all now recommit ourselves to the spirit of that partnership between poor and rich countries that we witnessed at Monterrey. Let's not douse that flame. We must forge ahead in achieving our common goal, as the Monterrey Consensus stipulated:

> "to eradicate poverty, achieve sustained economic growth and promote sustainable development as

we advance to a fully inclusive and equitable global economic system".

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. John Lintjer, Vice-President of Finance and Administration of the Asian Development Bank.

Mr. Lintner (Asian Development Bank): On behalf of the African and Asian Development Banks, let me first say that it is an honour and a pleasure to be here today. We appreciate the United Nations recognition of the importance of the regional development banks in the Monterrey Consensus and in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Monterrey was groundbreaking — both in achieving a consensus on a framework for development finance and in bringing greater inclusiveness to discussions such as ours today.

The special attributes of the regional development banks provide advantages in tackling the problems of equity in development. Four of these are of particular importance.

First, as regional institutions, we work in close partnership with and include many representatives from our developing member countries. This has enabled our continuing leadership in such important areas as governance, the fight against corruption, and the promotion of gender-awareness in development.

Secondly, we are mandated by our charters to support regional integration and cooperation, and subregional trade facilitation is an important element of the Asian Development Bank. Countries in our region have pulled themselves out of poverty through trade — much of it within Asia. Our work in this area is complementary to and is geared towards the effort to achieve greater global integration.

Thirdly, we support the development of regional projects for the public good, such as providing cross-country approaches for tackling AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in Africa and stemming the tide of the trafficking of women and children in Asia.

Fourthly, the regional development banks are also mandated to give special emphasis and attention to the needs of the smaller countries in our regions. Mostly, these are also the poorest nations, often with the least voice in the international system yet facing the most difficult odds in meeting their development goals. We give special consideration and visibility to the needs of these countries in our programmes and strategies.

We believe that these attributes are useful not only for the regional development banks but also for the broader development community in implementing the Monterrey Consensus and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

With regard to the commitments we made at Monterrey, we are undertaking special steps. We are sharpening our focus on results; our country programmes are aligned with country-driven poverty reduction strategies that emphasize achievement of the Goals; and we are improving our systems for monitoring and evaluation at all levels. We are actively harmonizing our operational procedures and processes with the Bretton Woods institutions and the bilateral donors and within the United Nations system.

We are addressing issues of development sustainability and issues of debt sustainability. The need for external financing to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in low-income countries, and particularly in many countries in Africa, might result in future debt crises in the absence of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. The case here is being made for more grant and concessional funding for those countries, and donors have taken an important step in the right direction by agreeing on a grant facility in the context of the resource mobilization efforts of the African Development Fund.

We have expanding regional and country-specific agendas in the areas of domestic finance and trade. Particularly in Asia and Latin America, foreign direct investment, mobilization of domestic resources and growth through trade will be important elements of financing for development. Regional development banks are working with countries to improve the business environment, strengthen the rule of law and improve tax and customs facilities. We also work to strengthen Governments in planning, use and accountability with respect to those resources.

In recognition of the importance of all actors in achieving sustainable development, we are increasing participation and voice in our projects, programmes and strategies. At the country level, this means greater inclusion of civil society and concerned parties; at the institutional level, it means greater outreach and partnership with international and regional organizations, as well as more accessible information about our organizations and their operations.

We are also participating more actively in global forums on financing for development. The Monterrey Consensus has helped provide a place and voice for our institutions. We, as regional development banks, plan to utilize that space to strengthen regional perspectives in the ongoing discussions and commitments.

In conclusion, we appreciate the leadership of the United Nations in development finance, and we support the spirit of cohesion kindled at Monterrey. We hope that these efforts will continue to pay off in resolving issues of development finance and in sustaining attention to the importance of the Millennium Development Goals. We, as regional development banks, are committed to doing our part.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Mervat Tallawy, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

Ms. Tallawy (Economic and Social Commission for Western Africa): I have the honour to make this statement, in my capacity as the current coordinator, on behalf of the regional economic and social commissions of the United Nations, namely, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

First, let me express my gratitude to the Assembly for inviting the regional commissions to this debate. Indeed, the regional commissions were involved in the Monterrey process from the beginning and are still engaged in the follow-up to Monterrey.

As mandated by the General Assembly as well as by our respective commissions, all of the regional commissions have been closely involved in the financing for development process, at both the preparatory and follow-up stages of the Monterrey Conference. The commissions remain active in support of the efforts of their member States to promote successful negotiations in the Doha round and to facilitate membership in the World Trade Organization for those developing countries that remain outside its orbit. Perhaps of greater significance is the fact that because of their in-house multidisciplinary capacities, the regional commissions are uniquely well placed to integrate implementation of the Monterrey Consensus with that of the outcomes of the other global conferences, in particular the Johannesburg Summit, and to truly treat it as a development agenda.

As members are well aware, global analyses and aggregates, important though they are in their own right, often provide an incomplete picture and hide some of the stark realities, thereby necessitating regional and subregional approaches. Proximity to the field enables us also to undertake more in-depth analyses and facilitates exchange of experiences, both regionally and interregionally.

As the Secretary-General's current report on the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323) indicates, 37 of the 67 countries for which data were available experienced increased poverty rates during the 1990s. With the recent downturn in the global economy, the situation in many developing countries has grown worse. With the exception of East, South-East and South Asia, in every region the poverty situation has deteriorated. Even in those regions of Asia that have done relatively better, many pockets remain stagnant or are worse off in absolute terms.

Trade was underlined as the engine of growth in the Monterrey Consensus. It is of utmost importance to improve market access for the developing countries. This particularly requires the elimination of trade-distorting subsidies and the reduction of support measures for agriculture in developed countries. As for financial cooperation, it is crystal clear that official development assistance (ODA) should be increased markedly from current levels if we are to stand a chance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

The fact is that development needs financing, investment and, most important of all, opportunities for trade, none of which, unfortunately, are very forthcoming in most of the developing regions. ECLAC estimates that net transfer of resources for the region of Latin America and the Caribbean will be negative for the fifth year running. In Africa, ECA data show that roughly 80 cents on every dollar that flowed into Africa flowed back as capital flights in the same year, suggesting widespread capital flight fuelled by debt. In West Asia too, capital flight is huge. West Asia's share of foreign direct investment in 2002 accounted for a meagre percentage of the world's total, not quite 0.7 per cent, and this was channelled to a limited number of sectors, namely oil, gas and tourism. National savings and foreign investment, as well as the

growth rate in general, have decreased due to conflict, war and political instability in the region. Moreover, all the developing regions have been experiencing ever higher levels of public debt, signalling significantly less manoeuvrability in terms of public policy.

There are, however, some new positive initiatives that are forthcoming at the regional and subregional levels. In June 2003, 11 Asia-Pacific central banks agreed to pool $1 billion of their foreign exchange reserves to establish the Asian Bond Fund. Since then, their finance ministers have been busy planning for the development of local currency bond markets to harness the vast savings for investment of that region. In Africa, under the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the efforts of countries to create an enabling atmosphere for sustainable development have received further impetus. Several of the African countries have also successfully initiated capital market development.

Latin America has been a pioneer in making successful experiments, with innovative ways of dealing with the pension problem that looms large in most of our countries, developed and developing alike. Arab banks and development funds have increased their financing of infrastructure and mega-projects in the ESCWA region.

In all the regions and subregions, economic integration movements are gaining new momentum. There is wide acknowledgement that a system that relies on networks of global and regional institutions is both more efficient and more equitable, for which the United Nations provides the ideal platform.

We must generate new momentum to accelerate the pace of development at the country, regional and global levels, and we must keep the interests and needs of the developing countries in the forefront. We need to significantly increase the flow of financial resources, both ODA and private capital, to developing countries and simultaneously remove the restrictions imposed on their exports, particularly of agricultural products.

In conclusion, I would like to indicate that for all of us in the five regional commissions the follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus is an area of focused and high priority activity in our respective work programmes for the 2004-2005 biennium. We in the regional commissions similarly attach high priority to the Millennium Development Goals and to regional integration. We in the regional commissions will continue to work hard on all these areas and on the integrated follow-up of global conferences through in-depth analysis, capacity-building, sharing of best practices and exchange of experiences, providing advisory services and promoting policy dialogue. In short, the five United Nations regional commissions strongly intend to remain engaged.

The President: I now invite representatives to go to Conference Room 4 for the informal interactive dialogue of the High-level Dialogue on financing for development.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.49

General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

49th plenary meeting
Thursday, 30 October 2003, at 6 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 6.25 p.m.

Agenda item 104

Follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development:

(b) High-level dialogue for the implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/58/216 and A/58/323)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/58/436)

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/58/3, Parts I-II)

Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council (A/58/77 and Add. 1 and 2)

Conference Room Paper (A/58/CRP.2)

The President: The following represents my assessment of the interactive dialogue in the General Assembly on financing for development.

Governments, international institutions and non-Government stakeholders who participated in our dialogue have clearly signalled their continued strong support for the unique Monterrey process. This is critical for full implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. Speakers were frank in their assessment of implementation, and progress — when it had occurred — was welcomed.

But much more is required, and there has been slippage in some areas, notably in disappointing developments in international trade and financial transfers. There were many calls for a more precise mechanism for monitoring, as we go forward, the Monterrey commitments and the targets embodied in Goal 8 of the Millennium Development Goals.

Both developed and developing countries should report on actions being taken to implement the Monterrey Consensus. The essential issue in delivering the Monterrey Consensus is political will, and many speakers called for the need to explore ways to muster the required political will. Certain developed countries described an approach that explicitly seeks greater coherence among Government policies and that, in so doing, would raise the visibility of the commitment to development. In this approach, legislation would require that decisions taken in different policy areas should be explicitly found consistent with development commitments.

We also learned that parliamentarians in developing countries are becoming more intimately involved in development and economic reform issues and that international support is engaged in indirect discussions with international financial institutions and bilateral donors on proposed programmes. This is a practical means for promoting "ownership" of reforms.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

03-58970 (E)

Many called for an increase in core resources for United Nations development assistance. There was a universal concern that the international trade negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) should resume as soon as possible and work expeditiously towards an effective development conclusion.

Some Governments expressed concern about the abuse of anti-dumping measures exemplifying a concern about how the WTO was functioning. A number of speakers emphasized the important role that regional cooperation can play in trade and financial issues and that it should be promoted further.

Concerns were expressed about international commodity markets, the exposure of developing countries' farmers to market vulnerability and to volatile and low prices, and the need to consider this matter at the United Nations in a more comprehensive and focused manner. One proposal was to adjust development assistance to counter the declines in cycles of commodity prices. Another idea was to consider some mechanism for commodity price guarantees for poor countries. Some delegations called for a more meaningful institutional relationship between the United Nations and the WTO. This was suggested by civil society.

While increases in aid were reported and commitments to further increased official development assistance were reiterated, the large gap between expected flows and what is needed to realize the Millennium Development Goals remained very large. No one questioned that this was so or gave us the answer as to how to close the gap.

The importance of increasing aid to support rural development and agriculture in developing countries was emphasized. The need of this sector was the focus of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council last summer. Speakers expressed disappointment at how slow the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative has been to deliver relief, and questions about the adequacy of the relief were raised. A number of creditor countries said they were willing to revisit the issue of topping-up, which is a mechanism to deepen debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries when they complete their programme and still do not have — or would not have had — sufficient relief.

More generally, there seems to be considerable interest in undertaking further international work on how to resolve sovereign debt crises and how to be more successful in preventing them. It was felt by many that the United Nations could help facilitate such considerations, such as through the Secretary-General's proposed informal study group or an independent international arbitration group under the auspices of the United Nations. While there are common financing needs for development, differentiated support is needed for emerging countries, middle-income countries, least developed countries and land-locked and small island developing States. Some speakers focused attention on remittances as a major source of financial flows from developed to developing countries. There were some efforts to make such transfers less costly and simpler. There is a need to strengthen international cooperation on tax matters, and there was strong interest in pursuing the Secretary-General's proposal to upgrade the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Cooperation in Tax Matters. An enhanced dialogue on tax issues should be global and include the full representation of small States.

There were strong calls for additional, new and innovative sources of financing for development. Many speakers reiterated the need to establish and consolidate democratic structures at the domestic level for better governance, including through improved transparency, anti-corruption regulations and measures to combat money-laundering. There is equal concern to strengthen democratic processes at the global level, in particular to enhance the participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in international financial institutions, and in more settled and standard ways. The United Nations, through the Economic and Social Council, could play a larger role as a forum for discussion on macroeconomic policy coordination at the global level.

Several countries were concerned about reforming the Economic and Social Council in order to make it more effective in international economic and social affairs and, in particular, to maintain the momentum of the financing for development process. One specific proposal was to expand the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council. Another proposal was to create an Economic and Social Security Council. Yet another was for the formation of an intergovernmental body to adequately prepare for the Monterrey follow-up meeting.

In addition, there were proposals to form, under the financing for development umbrella, various informal, multistakeholder working groups to address various technical policy issues, such as financial sector development, financial cooperation, tax matters and debt arbitration. A number of speakers from developing countries described efforts in the area of South-South financial cooperation. That included assistance to least developed regional partners and South-South debt relief.

We have had two full days of holistic interactive dialogue on financing for development. We have reviewed all chapters of the Monterrey Consensus, and we have heard from practically all stakeholders. I want to personally thank all of you for participating, and, in particular, the Secretariat for their usual tremendous support.

I have shared with you highlights of our dialogue and will submit a more comprehensive summary to the Second Committee, as mandated. Let us leave here committed to act and implement what we have articulated in words over the last couple of days. It is with pleasure — and I am sure with great relief to some of you — that I declare the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development to be closed.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.50

General Assembly
Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

50th plenary meeting
Friday, 31 October 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 13

Report of the International Court of Justice

(a) Report of the International Court of Justice (A/58/4 and Corr. 1)

(b) Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/295)

The President: May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the report of the International Court of Justice?

It was so decided.

The President: In connection with this item, the Assembly also has before it a report of the Secretary-General on the Secretary-General's Trust Fund to Assist States in the Settlement of Disputes through the International Court of Justice, which has been circulated in document A/58/295.

I call on Mr. Shi Jiuyong, President of the International Court of Justice.

Mr. Shi Jiuyong (International Court of Justice): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly for the first time in my presidency, on the occasion of its examination of the report of the International Court of Justice for the period 1 August 2002 to 31 July 2003.

This yearly contact which has been established between the Court and the General Assembly since 1968 allows for an invaluable direct interchange between these two sister organs of the United Nations. In particular, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Assembly for its continued interest in the work of the Court, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, whose vocation is to deal with legal disputes submitted to it by Member States, as well as legal questions put to it by other organs of the United Nations and duly authorized specialized agencies.

I am particularly pleased to address the Assembly today under the distinguished presidency of Mr. Julian R. Hunte, Minister for External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia. I offer you, Sir, my warm congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. You have my sincerest wishes for every success in his eminent office. I should like particularly to commend you for your unflagging determination to pursue the struggle against the principal sources of conflict, and for your vision of the international community, which encompasses peaceful coexistence between States and equity among nations large and small, as well as your commitment to strengthening civil society and encouraging sustainable development, in particular in the context of small island States.

The Court has, as usual, transmitted its annual report to the Assembly, and that report has been circulated together with an introductory summary. A corrigendum to the report relating to the case

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03-58976 (E)

concerning *Avena and Other Mexican Nationals* (*Mexico v. United States of America*) has further been distributed this week. I will not impose on the General Assembly a complete reading of those documents, but I would nevertheless like to summarize and stress some of the essential elements therein reported.

May I begin by recalling that 191 States are currently parties to the Statute of the Court, and that 60 of them have accepted the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court in accordance with Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute. Furthermore, approximately 300 treaties refer to the Court in relation to the settlement of disputes arising from their application or interpretation.

Since my predecessor, President Guillaume, addressed the Assembly in October 2002, the International Court of Justice has been as busy as ever. As of 31 August 2003, the docket of the Court stood at 25 cases. This number now stands at 23, following the removal from the Court's list in early September 2003, at the joint request of the parties, of two cases brought before the Court in 1992 by Libya, against the United Kingdom and against the United States of America, in respect of disputes concerning the interpretation and application of the 1971 Montreal Convention arising from the aerial incident at Lockerbie.

Those cases come from all over the world, four being between African States, one between Asian States, 11 between European States and three between Latin American States, while four are of an intercontinental character. That international distribution reflects the universal composition of the Court itself, comprised as it currently is of members from Brazil, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, Jordan, Madagascar, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Venezuela.

The subject matter of the cases before the Court is extremely varied. As is frequently the case, the Court's docket contains a number of cases concerning territorial disputes between neighbouring States seeking a determination of their land and maritime boundaries, or a decision as to which of them has sovereignty over particular areas. This is the position for four cases concerning, respectively, Nicaragua and Honduras, Nicaragua and Colombia, Benin and Niger, and Malaysia and Singapore.

Another classic type of dispute is one in which a State complains of the treatment of its nationals in another State. That is the position in the cases of Guinea against the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liechtenstein against Germany, Mexico against the United States of America, and the Republic of the Congo against France.

Other cases relate to events that the General Assembly or the Security Council have had to address. Thus, Iran has brought proceedings over the alleged destruction of oil platforms by the United States in 1987 and 1988. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia have, in two separate cases, sought the condemnation of Serbia and Montenegro — formerly the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia — for violation of the 1948 International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Serbia and Montenegro itself has brought proceedings against eight States members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, challenging the legality of their action in Kosovo. Finally, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in two separate cases, contends that it has been the victim of armed aggression on the part of Uganda and Rwanda, respectively.

The Court's decisions in the course of the period under review include in particular three Judgments on merits and two orders on request for provisional measures. In October 2002, the Court gave a Judgment in the case concerning the land and maritime boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria (*Cameroon v. Nigeria: Equatorial Guinea intervening*) thereby putting an end to a long-standing territorial and frontier dispute. The Court decided that sovereignty over Bakassi lay with Cameroon. The Court also determined the boundary in the Lake Chad area and defined with extreme precision the course of the land boundary between the two States in 17 other disputed sectors. The Court then went on to determine the maritime boundary between the two States. Drawing upon the consequences of its determination of the land boundary, the Court held that each of the two States is under an obligation expeditiously and without condition to withdraw its administration and military and police forces from areas falling within the sovereignty of the other. In the reasoning of its Judgment, the Court also noted that the implementation of the Judgment would provide the parties with a beneficial opportunity for cooperation. It took note of Cameroon's undertaking at the hearings that,

> "'faithful to its traditional policy of hospitality and tolerance', it 'will continue to afford

> protection to Nigerians living in the Bakassi Peninsula and in the Lake Chad area'". (*A/58/4, para. 19*)

Finally, the Court rejected each party's State responsibility claims against the other.

In December 2002, the Court rendered its Judgment in the case concerning sovereignty over Pulau Ligitan and Pulau Sipadan (Indonesia/Malaysia) in which it found that the 1891 Convention between Great Britain and the Netherlands, on which Indonesia based its claim to sovereignty over the islands, could not be taken to establish a title to sovereignty and that neither of the parties had obtained title to Ligitan and Sipadan by succession. The Court concluded, on the basis of *effectivités* — that is, activities evidencing an actual, continued exercise of State authority over the islands — that sovereignty over the islands of Ligitan and Sipadan belonged to Malaysia.

The third Judgment rendered by the Court in the period in question related to its previous decision on preliminary objections of 11 July 1996 in the case concerning application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (*Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro*), in which the Court had found, inter alia, that, on the basis of article IX of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, it had jurisdiction to adjudicate upon the dispute.

In April 2001, Serbia and Montenegro filed an application for revision of that decision, subsequent to its admission to the United Nations on 1 November 2000 — a fact which, it contended, proved that it was not a Member of the United Nations, was not a State party to the Statute of the Court and was not a State party to the genocide Convention prior to that date. In its Judgment of 3 February 2003, the Court rejected the request for revision on the grounds that the recent admission of the applicant to the United Nations could not be regarded as a new fact within the meaning of Article 61 of its Statute, capable of founding a request for revision of the 1996 Judgment. In other words, the Court found that a fact which had occurred several years after a Judgment had been given could not be regarded as a new fact for the purposes of the Court's revision procedure.

Also in February 2003, the Court issued an order indicating provisional measures in the case submitted by Mexico on 9 January 2003 concerning a dispute over alleged violations of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations with respect to 54 Mexican nationals sentenced to death in certain States of the United States of America. The Court stated that the United States

> "'shall take all measures necessary to ensure that [three of the Mexican nationals, who are at risk of execution in the month coming], are not executed pending final judgment' in the case; and that the United States 'shall inform the Court of all measures taken in implementation of the Order'". (ibid., *para. 22*)

In June 2003, the Court issued another order on a request for provisional measures, in the case concerning certain criminal proceedings in France — *Republic of the Congo v. France*. In its application of 9 December 2002, the Republic of the Congo had sought to institute proceedings against France with a view to obtaining the annulment of the investigation and prosecution measures taken by the French judicial authorities further to a complaint for crimes against humanity and torture filed by various associations against the President of the Republic of the Congo, the Congolese Minister of the Interior and other individuals, including the Inspector-General of the Congolese Armed Forces.

The application also stated that, in connection with these proceedings, an investigating judge of the Meaux *Tribunal de grande instance* had issued a warrant for the President of the Republic of the Congo to be examined as a witness. The Republic of the Congo further stated that it sought to found the jurisdiction of the Court, pursuant to article 38, paragraph 5, of the Rules of Court, on the consent of the French Republic, which will certainly be given. This provision in the Rules of Court refers to situations where the applicant State proposes to found the jurisdiction of the Court upon a consent thereto yet to be given or manifested by the State against which such application is made. In such circumstances, the case does not proceed unless and until the defendant State consents to jurisdiction.

Following France's consent, given in April 2003, to the jurisdiction of the Court to entertain the application, the case was entered in the Court's List and the proceedings were opened. The request for the indication of a provisional measure, which the Republic of the Congo had submitted on the same day

as the application, was activated also by the acceptance of the Court's jurisdiction by France. In that request, the Republic of the Congo sought an order for the immediate suspension of the proceedings being conducted by the investigating judge of the Meaux *Tribunal de grande instance*. In its Order on provisional measures, however, the Court found, on the facts before it, that no risk of irreparable prejudice existed with regard to the rights claimed by the applicant and rejected the Congo's request.

The case brought by the Republic of the Congo is the first case of the kind contemplated by article 38, paragraph 5, of the Rules of Court in which the State named as respondent, on being notified of the application made against it, has in fact agreed to accept jurisdiction. The provision whereby such an application is ineffective until the other State accepts jurisdiction was introduced to discourage proceedings from being brought before the Court for purely political reasons, in the absence of any jurisdictional title. Nevertheless, it remains open to any State to use this means of extending an invitation to another State to confer jurisdiction on the Court in a specific dispute and thus to demonstrate its confidence in the Court. Furthermore, since France was free to disregard the application, the fact that it chose to accept jurisdiction and to appear and defend the case is an encouraging tribute to the value of judicial proceedings as a means of pacific settlement of disputes.

Following hearings earlier this year, the Court recently completed its deliberations on the *Oil Platforms* (*Islamic Republic of Iran v. United States of America*) case, concerning the destruction by United States Navy warships, in 1987 and 1988, of three offshore oil production complexes owned and operated by the National Iranian Oil Company. The Court will deliver its Judgment, in this case, in open court shortly after my return to The Hague.

Following hearings in September 2003, the Chamber of the Court in the case concerning *Application for Revision of the Judgment of 11 September 1992 in the Case concerning the Land, Island and Maritime Frontier Dispute (El Salvador/Honduras: Nicaragua intervening) (El Salvador v. Honduras)* is similarly holding deliberations. Hearings are also scheduled for November 2003 in the case concerning *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda)*; and hearings in the case concerning *Avena and Other Mexican Nationals (Mexico v. United States of America)* are due to open in December 2003.

In addition to the Chamber formed for the case between El Salvador and Honduras, the Court has, as requested by the parties, also formed a five-member Chamber to deal with a boundary dispute between Benin and Niger. The Court is thus maintaining its work rate and looks forward to an equally busy schedule next year.

Before concluding this part of my statement, I would like to stress the fact that both Judgments and orders indicating provisional measures made by the Court are binding on the parties. For it is indeed this binding nature of its decisions which lies at the heart of the Court's mission to solve legal disputes between States and is the necessary condition for the successful achievement of that mission. Under Article 94, paragraph 1, of the Charter, each Member of the United Nations undertakes to comply with the decision of the International Court of Justice in any case to which it is a party. Article 60 of the Statute of the Court adds that Judgments of the Court are final and without appeal. The binding effect of orders indicating provisional measures under Article 41 of the Statute of the Court has recently been confirmed by the Judgment rendered by the Court in the *LaGrand* case. The Court has no doubt, therefore, that parties to litigation before it will continue to implement its decisions, as they have done in the past.

As my predecessors have endeavoured to point out, the Court is always aware of its duty to deal with cases as promptly and efficiently as possible. The working methods of the Court are subject to permanent re-examination in an effort to avoid delays in the Court's proceedings. This constant quest to meet the expectations of the parties before the Court is necessary in view of the considerable number of cases on its docket.

Furthermore, many cases have been rendered more complex as a result of preliminary objections by respondents to jurisdiction or admissibility and of counterclaims and applications for permission to intervene, not to mention requests by applicants — and even sometimes by respondents — for the indication of provisional measures, which have to be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

In that regard, in order to improve efficiency, the internal mechanisms of the Court are under constant review. But we also ask parties before the Court to cooperate in achieving our common goal. For example, the Court has issued a number of Practice Directions, including Practice Direction IX, which is aimed at limiting the late filing of documents, in accordance with article 56 of the Rules of Court. The Court has also noted the increasing tendency of parties to use requests for the indication of provisional measures as an opportunity to provide an early outline of their cases on the merits. It is therefore looking into ways of emphasizing — and indeed requiring — that, in hearings on such requests, parties should focus on the legal conditions for the indication of provisional measures.

The Court is also aware of the importance of keeping pace with technological developments in order to improve the internal functioning of its Registry. The Court's well-regarded web site and its intranet — the Court's internal web site — are in the process of being redesigned to make them more dynamic and easier to use. The Court has also set up an electronic document management system, which provides immediate access to case files and archival documentation. In particular, the ZyIMAGE document retrieval software, which provides an updated bilingual database, enables users quickly to access and consult a wide range of legal and Court-related materials.

In its budgetary request for the biennium 2004 to 2005, the Court has asked for provision to be made for an additional professional officer in the Computerization Division, which currently has only one post in the Professional category. The Court believes that it is absolutely essential to recruit a professional with advanced information technology skills in order to be able to meet the General Assembly's request for more enhanced use of modern technology.

Nor can the Court overlook the need for well-qualified young lawyers to assist with research for its 15 members, and to that end, in its latest budgetary proposal it has requested the conversion of the funds temporarily available for five law clerks into established posts. The Court has also requested the creation of two security posts, as recommended by the United Nations Security Coordinator. In making those requests — which are presently under consideration — the Court has restricted itself to proposals that are financially modest but also of the utmost significance for the implementation of key aspects of its work. The Court hopes that those budgetary proposals will meet with the agreement of the Assembly, thereby enabling the principal judicial organ of the United Nations to better serve the international community.

While the International Court of Justice carries out its work in the tranquil setting of The Hague — far from the hustle and bustle of Headquarters in New York — its activities contribute in a very direct way to the overall aims and objectives of the United Nations. The Court's potential in that regard is apparent in the wide-ranging impact that its work already has on the international community. In particular, the role that the Court plays — through the power of justice and international law — in resolving disputes between States is widely recognized and evidenced by the number of cases on the Court's docket.

Furthermore, it is not uncommon that these cases deal directly with issues concerning international peace and security. The impartiality of the Court's judicial procedure and the equality of arms that it guarantees to the parties before it — inherent elements of the Court's nature — undoubtedly contribute to the effective resolution of such disputes. In performing its dispute resolution function, the Court, which embodies the principle of equality of all before the law, acts as guardian of international law and ensures the maintenance of a coherent international legal order. I can assure the Assembly that the Court will pursue its efforts to respond to the hopes placed in it.

The Court thanks the Assembly for its help and counts on it for continuing support in the years to come, in the interests of justice, peace and law.

Ms. Al Bakri Devadason (Malaysia): Permit me at the outset to thank Judge Shi Jiuyong, President of the International Court of Justice, for his enlightening introduction of the report of the Court (A/58/4). That comprehensive report contains useful information on the work of the Court and provides us with a better understanding of the complex issues before it.

We appreciate the important contribution of the International Court of Justice to the peaceful settlement of disputes between States and to the development of international law. Indeed, the peaceful settlement of disputes is one of the fundamental pillars of the United Nations. We acknowledge that the International Court of Justice has tremendous influence in the promotion of

peace and harmony among the nations and peoples of the world through the rule of law.

The Court plays an important role in resolving disputes submitted by States and giving advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it in accordance with international law. That role should not be underestimated in the common endeavour to promote peace among nations. The Court provides a more prudent and civilized alternative to violence and the use of force.

We are pleased to note the marked progression in the caseload of the Court since its inception 58 years ago. That is testimony to the growing confidence of States in the work of the Court and to the willingness of the international community to be governed by the principles of international law in the conduct of international relations.

The Court has handed down judgements and opinions of excellent quality. The acceptance of those judgements and opinions by the parties concerned demonstrates the preference of States to avail themselves of the wisdom of the Court to resolve disputes peacefully. Indeed, this increasing recourse by States to the judicial settlement of their disputes has granted the Court centrality in the administration of international justice. Confidence in the role, function and accomplishments of the Court has strengthened Malaysia's belief that the Court is the most appropriate forum for a peaceful and final resolution of disputes when all efforts in diplomacy have been exhausted.

Malaysia, in mutual agreement with its friendly neighbours, Indonesia and Singapore, decided to submit both of its respective territorial disputes with them for adjudication by the Court. We welcome the Judgment of the Court delivered on 17 December 2002 on the dispute with Indonesia, which relates to the sovereignty over two islands, Pulau Ligitan and Pulau Sipadan. In this regard, Malaysia is truly grateful that the Court's decision has been fully respected by both sides. With regard to the territorial dispute with Singapore concerning sovereignty over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge, currently in the Court's docket and which will begin its pleadings stage, we wish to affirm that, consistent with its abiding respect for international law, Malaysia will fully respect the Court's decision on the case. This respect for the Court's decision will contribute to enhancing the Court's stature and prestige among Member States and in turn inculcate a culture of respect for international law in relations among States.

Malaysia welcomes the increasing recourse to the Court by Member States. The number of cases currently in the Court's docket stands at 23 and covers a range of varied subject matter. This augurs well for the progressive development of international law and the role of the Court as a dispute settlement mechanism. We note with interest that 64 States have declared their acceptance of the Court's compulsory jurisdiction in accordance with Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute. Also noteworthy is the fact that some 300 bilateral and multilateral treaties have provided for the Court to have jurisdiction in the resolution of disputes arising out of their application or interpretation. Through its work, the Court will play an important role not only in the development of the body of international law but also in establishing and maintaining the primacy of international law. Indeed, rule of law and the primacy of international law in the settlement of disputes rather than the use of force are particularly significant in our world today.

We realize that with the increase in its workload, the Court is faced with the challenge of responding speedily and soundly to the ever more complicated matters before it. Undoubtedly, there is a pressing need to enhance the Court's capability to enable it to efficiently dispose of the cases before it as well as to undertake its additional administrative responsibilities. The Court's efforts to deal with this challenge through improved working methods and the implementation of the various measures that it initiated in 1997 appear to have borne fruit. We welcome the continuation of those efforts, particularly the greater use of information technology, and encourage the constant review of the implementation of the improved working methods in order to meet the needs of the Court. We are pleased to note the strengthened capacity of the Department of Linguistic Matters since its recent expansion and the progress in the automation and computerization of the Archives, Indexing and Distribution Division.

We note that in its requests to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the Court has made proposals which it considers to be financially modest but of utmost significance to the key aspects of its work. In this regard, we hope that the Court will be granted adequate resources to allow it to continue to fulfil its mandate efficaciously, as its increasing workload demands.

The Court's efforts to increase public awareness and understanding of its work in the judicial settlement of disputes and its advisory functions are laudable. Malaysia considers the publications and lectures by members of the Court to be valuable in the promotion and dissemination of international law. In this regard, we commend the Court's initiatives to improve and modernize its methods of disseminating information concerning its work. Its employment of electronic media has made it tremendously convenient to follow the work of the Court and access its judicial pronouncements. The Court's web site has indeed been very useful to diplomats, academicians, students and interested members of the public. It is undoubtedly one of the most useful sources of public access to the most recent developments in international case law.

Ms. Amadi (Kenya): I thank the President of the International Court of Justice for the lucid and elaborate report contained in document A/58/4. It provides a clear basis for our discussion today, as it outlines the work that the Court has undertaken to date and the difficulties it faces in implementing its core functions.

My delegation notes with satisfaction that the International Court of Justice, in the discharge of its onerous yet indispensable mandate, has established itself as truly the only court of a universal character with general jurisdiction. The increase in the number and diversity of cases referred to the Court attests to the confidence of States in the integrity of this principal judicial organ of the United Nations. It is our hope that the Court will continue to dispense justice with integrity and impartiality in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the Statute of the Court.

We support the establishment of the new posts, particularly for legal clerks, who we believe will be able to speed up the Court's work, for justice delayed is justice denied. To have 23 cases pending is not a good reflection of the administration of justice in the world court. Indeed the Court's workload is heavy, as reported in paragraphs 61 to 64 of the report. In paragraph 25 and 304, the report notes that the judicial year has been particularly busy. It is envisaged that the following year will be equally busy, if not more so. Given that there are 191 Member States — which increasingly recognize the Court's important role in the pacific settlement of international disputes — we are certain that this trend will continue.

My delegation appreciates the measures that have been taken to reduce delays at the Court, as reported in paragraph 26. We urge the Registrar to continue to improve on these measures in order to expeditiously determine the cases that come before the Court.

We note the increase last year in the budget requirements for personnel. In the light of the Court's increased workload, it should continue to rationalize its operations. In particular, there could be a need to examine the possibility of increasing the number of permanent judges in order to deal expeditiously with pending and future cases. In that regard, the President of the Court could make proposals for consideration by the General Assembly, perhaps at the next session.

We commend the President and members of the Court for promoting a better understanding of the Court and its role within the United Nations through speeches and presentations in various institutions around the world. My delegation's concern is that none of those speeches and presentations were made in Africa. We therefore call upon the Court not only to redouble its efforts in this regard but also to make deliberate efforts to ensure that, in the planning of these activities, due regard is given to developing countries, particularly those in Africa.

Kenya attaches great importance to the work of the International Court of Justice. In that regard, Kenya has deposited with the Secretary-General a declaration of acceptance of the Court's compulsory jurisdiction in accordance with Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute of the Court. We note that only 64 States parties have now deposited declarations under this article. We therefore encourage States that have not yet done so to deposit their declaration with the Secretary-General in order to further entrench the universality of the Court.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): As the Chairman of the Sixth Committee I wish to say that, with the consent of the Bureau and the members of the Committee, we suspended our morning meeting to hear the important report of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The Philippine delegation expresses its appreciation to Judge Shi Jiuyong, President of the International Court of Justice, for his comprehensive presentation today on the report of the Court to the General Assembly. In the same vein, we would like to extend our congratulations to him for his election early this year as President of the Court, as well as to Judge Raymond Ranjeva, who was elected Vice-

President of the Court. We would also like to take this opportunity to extend our congratulations to the Judges who were re-elected and who were elected during the previous session of the General Assembly and whose term of office took effect on 6 February this year.

The past 12 months have underscored the importance of the role played by the Court as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations and the only court of a universal character with general jurisdiction. The acceptance by many States of the Court's judicial role — not just because they are States parties to its Statute, but also because they have submitted to its jurisdiction in contentious cases — is a testament to the recognition of how effectively the Court has pursued its mandate over the years.

The Court is now, more than ever, immensely preoccupied with the disposal of pending cases from its busy docket. These cases have not only increased in number, but have evolved in terms of the range of issues requiring adjudication and the geographic reach of the parties involved. The parties that seek the Court's jurisdiction come from all parts of the world, and the variety of the cases it handles today ranges broadly from territorial disputes to diplomatic and consular protection by States of their nationals.

In its function as a judicial organ, the Court has not only provided greater understanding of international law through its decisions and judicial pronouncements, it has also become an indispensable instrument for the pacific settlement of disputes between and among States. Thus, the Court has become an indispensable cog of the geopolitical architecture by providing a solid compass for the development of international law and by serving as a significant pillar, both for the maintenance of international peace and security and for the strengthening of the rule of law in State-to-State relations.

The Court faces a tremendous challenge to stay relevant and on the cutting-edge of political developments and the legal demands of a world that is, on the one hand, getting smaller as it rushes to develop its technology but, on the other hand, is growing apart because of the widening gap between rich and poor countries. The Court must continue to improve its working methods and those of its Registry and to strengthen its procedures so as to allow the consideration and adjudication of cases without delay. It must avail itself more extensively of the advantages of information technology and seek greater collaboration with relevant parties in order to streamline its proceedings.

Resort to the judicial system that is uniquely afforded by the Court must be made easily accessible to all nations, particularly to poor nations. The Court must be the court of last resort for all nations seeking justice and resolution of their disputes and disagreements. In the asymmetrical reality of power politics, the Court, as an instrument of the rule of law, provides an opportunity for small and poor countries to improve their chances of finding a resolution to a dispute with a stronger and mightier adversary. The Court provides the equalizer that would prove the counter-adage that might does not necessarily make right.

It is in this context that the Secretary-General's Trust Fund to assist States in the judicial settlement of disputes through the International Court of Justice would prove its strategic purpose. While access to the Court is free, the cost of submitting a dispute to the Court remains prohibitive. It is unfortunate, however, that the guidelines for use of the Trust Fund are quite restrictive with regard to the type of cases and the range of costs for which it could be applied. We hope that these issues can be addressed so that the utility of the Trust Fund can be optimized for the benefit of poor nations.

The Philippines is a strong believer of the significant contribution of the International Court of Justice to the comprehensive vision of the United Nations. The United Nations Charter, of which the Statute of the Court forms an integral part, has provided the international community the only viable multilateral arrangement for the maintenance of international peace and security for more than a half-century. As with any organization, the United Nations, including the Court, requires periodic review to ensure that it stays relevant as it advances in years and as the world undergoes unrelenting transformation brought about by advancing technology and knowledge.

The Philippine delegation is pleased that an important priority for the current presidency of the General Assembly is the revitalization of the Organization. We encourage you, Mr. President, to maintain a steady hand in this course. It is our hope, moreover, that the Court will not be overlooked in this exercise. In these days of mounting challenges to the

international community, we need a Court that will continue to be a relevant instrument of fairness and justice for all the nations of the world.

Mr. Motomura (Japan): It is my great pleasure and honour, on behalf of the Government of Japan, to address this Assembly under your presidency. My delegation would like to thank President Shi Jiuyong for his in-depth report on the current situation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The report gave us confidence that the new team of Judges, who began their work in February of this year, are addressing a variety of issues brought to the jurisdiction of the Court with considerable efficiency.

In the current state of international society, there is no question that the importance of the Court, with its long history, solid jurisprudence and the confidence that States place in it, remains unchanged. Indeed, under the present circumstances, in which we continue to witness armed conflict and acts of terrorism, achieving the goal of establishing and maintaining the primacy of integrated international law is essential. The role of the Court, as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, is crucial in this undertaking.

As a State that firmly believes in the rule of law and strongly upholds the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes, Japan appreciates the strenuous efforts and meticulous work of the Court. We fully support the role of the Court in striving to make further contributions to strengthening the rule of law in international society and in resolving international crises.

It is important to note that there is an increasing number of cases appearing on the docket of the Court. The Court needs to make a concerted effort to establish a more efficient system of management that would enable it to render a greater number of Judgments without sacrificing the quality of its work. At the same time, the international community must consider the level of resources that must be made available to the Court so that it can fulfil its role as guardian of the rule of law. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), in its report on the budget for the biennium 2004-2005, proposed the conversion of five judicial clerkships from temporary to permanent status. My delegation believes that such a change would be a significant step towards the strengthening of the Court's capacity.

To conclude my statement, I would like to stress once again the willingness of my Government to contribute to the strengthening of the International Court of Justice so that it will be well equipped for the invaluable role that it is to play in establishing the rule of law in international society for the twenty-first century.

Mr. Andrianarivelo-Razafy (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to extend the sincere and warm congratulations of the delegation of Madagascar to Mr. Shi Jiuyong on his election to the presidency of the International Court of Justice. We wish him every success in his new task. We would also like to express our appreciation to the President of the Court for introducing the excellent report of the International Court of Justice (A/58/4).

These past few years, we have witnessed on an almost daily basis violations of the principles of humanitarian law. We have witnessed regional and subregional conflicts which are tearing the world apart almost everywhere. We have witnessed border disputes and maritime disputes which give rise to disagreement among the sovereign States concerned.

The Charter encourages all parties to settle their disputes by peaceful means, in particular by recourse to judicial settlement. The International Court of Justice, as the primary judicial body of the United Nations, and having universal jurisdiction, plays that fundamental role. It thus contributes to the strengthening of our system in the maintenance of international peace and security, concepts that are inseparable.

The current evolution of international affairs has shown that cases brought to the Court are not only increasing in number but are becoming increasingly varied and complex. The increase in the diversity of cases that States have freely submitted to the Court, as well as in their number — from 10 on the docket five years ago to 25 today — is an encouraging sign and an irreversible trend. It reflects the growing confidence of Member States in the Court. Even better, it shows that law is taking precedence in the peaceful settlement of international disputes, even if the application of international law to help smooth over difficulties requires political will and political choices by States.

Nevertheless, the recognition by only one third of the membership of the United Nations of the binding jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice under Article 36, paragraph 2, of the Statute does not

strengthen the aforementioned trend, although States can choose the applicable legislation in the settlement of their disputes. Madagascar attaches special importance to the work of the Court and is happy to be among the 20 African countries that have made declarations recognizing the Court's binding jurisdiction. We encourage States that have not yet done so to recognize that jurisdiction. This would strengthen the credibility of the Court and would streamline its procedures.

The International Court of Justice represents impartial justice for the international community, with a view to better organizing the world for the furthering of peace and development.

The Court's efforts to better deal with the disputes before it deserve support. Knowing the practices of States and national legislations, referring to the Statute and to the jurisprudence of international criminal jurisdictions and, finally, applying Security Council resolutions regarding respect for human rights and for international humanitarian law all help the Court reach decisions that are founded on legal bases and that are in accordance with the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter.

We are grateful to the judges and staff of the Court for having worked so hard to accelerate the examination of cases before it. They have done this over the past few years in spite of a modest budget. We welcome progress made in the Court to improve its working methods in order to adapt to the considerable increase in its workload during the year under review. The Malagasy delegation thus believes that significant financial, material and organizational means must be allocated to the Court, pending the desired and necessary reform of the United Nations system. Such a commitment by the international community is necessary to support the Court in the coming years.

Justice is the fortress of the weak and the refuge of the poor. Madagascar welcomes the Trust Fund — created in 1989 by the Secretary-General — enabling parties to a conflict to apply to the Court for a judicial settlement. This assistance, given to States for expenses incurred during trials, particularly benefits developing countries which are experiencing various social problems and which are fighting against poverty. Such countries have a great need for the Fund's resources — which, unfortunately, have diminished steadily since the Fund was created.

In this context, Madagascar welcomes the existence of other international tribunals. Recent serious and systematic violations of humanitarian law require effective international machinery to ensure the appearance in court and punishment of perpetrators of odious crimes that threaten international peace and security.

It is also time to ensure that international law — and humanitarian law in general — prevails. It is time to protect the legitimate interests of the victims of conflicts. Close cooperation among the various international tribunals is desirable in order to standardize jurisprudence and the decisions handed down. Greater synergy among the principal organs of the Organization is also necessary for the effective revitalization of the entire United Nations system.

Mr. Lobach (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First and foremost, the Russian delegation would like to thank the President of the International Court of Justice, Mr. Shi Jiuyong, for his very thorough presentation to the General Assembly of the report on the work of the International Court (A/58/4).

The International Court is the chief judicial organ, not only of the United Nations, but perhaps of the entire system of international relations. It has a lead role in fulfilling one of the most important Charter duties of the United Nations: ensuring the peaceful settlement of disputes among States. The Court plays an irreplaceable role in interpreting the norms of international law; this has a direct impact on the progressive development of international law.

We are gratified to note that in recent years there has been growing interest on the part of States in the activities of the International Court, which indicates that its authority is growing and that there is a strengthening of the legal basis for international relations as a whole. This is indisputably indicated by the large number of applications that have been filed by States with the International Court regarding various disputes.

In our view, the International Court is successfully discharging the obligations that are incumbent upon it. But this does not remove from the agenda the question of making its work even more effective. To a large extent, this has been promoted by steps the Court has taken in previous years to rationalize its working procedures, particularly those aimed at reducing the time it takes to consider cases. It

is our belief that we need to continue to monitor this matter closely. The General Assembly should maintain a constant and appropriate level of financial and staffing support for the work of the International Court of Justice and give full consideration to requests that have been made in that connection by its directors.

Recent decades have been characterized by the headlong development of international jurisprudence. In that connection, we need only refer to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the International Criminal Court. This proliferation of international jurisprudence, caused by objective needs, quite legitimately gives rise to the question of the nature of the relationship among the various institutions of international justice.

In that connection, proposals have been discussed, even for the construction of a sort of hierarchical system of international judicial bodies. The Russian Federation does not agree with that approach. It does not believe that the absence of such a system would — or could — lead to the violation of the unity of international law, including the appearance of competing legal precedents. We believe that the International Criminal Court, in the light of all the existing and possible future international jurisdictions, has a unique role to play because of its importance, which can be strengthened and developed by all means possible.

Mr. Adekanye (Nigeria): The delegation of Nigeria commends the president of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Judge Shi Jiuyong for the report contained in document A/58/4 on the activities of the Court for the period 1 August 2002 to 31 July 2003. As the main judicial organ of the United Nations for the pacific settlement of disputes between Member States, the Court has continued to attract the confidence of Member States in its defence of the principle of the rule of law in inter-State relations because of its universal character and general jurisdiction. We note, in that connection, that, as of 31 July 2003, some 191 States have become parties to the Statute of the Court, while 64 of those States, including Nigeria, have deposited with the Secretary-General a declaration of acceptance of the Court's compulsory jurisdiction, in accordance with Article 36, paragraph 2 of its Statute. We believe that this is a positive development for world peace through international law.

Another positive development highlighted in the report concerns the increase in the number of cases on its docket, which stood at 25 as of 31 July 2003. This is as much a reflection of the confidence and trust of States Parties in the impartial role of the ICJ as an indication of the high expectations that its decisions should strengthen peace and good neighbourliness among States. At the same time, however, we are concerned that the increase in the number and diversity of cases will entail an additional workload on the judges. In order for them to perform their duties effectively, we support additional financial and human resources for the Court. The various measures taken since 1997 to rationalize the work of its Registry are indicative of the Court's capacity to properly manage such additional resources. We note in this connection that the Court has already taken advantage of advances in science and technology through the adaptation of communication and information technology to improve its working methods and thereby to enhance its cooperation with States parties, particularly on procedures.

We also commend the Court for its publications, which include reports of judgements, advisory opinions and orders, and we find them to be invaluable sources of international law for Member States, especially the developing countries. We believe that the availability of those documents to States parties, as well as regional and international judicial institutions, would enhance understanding of the Court's procedures and decisions as well as help promote uniformity in international law. It is equally desirable that States parties continue to be availed of assistance to enable them to bear the expenses of the proceedings initiated before the Court. In that connection, we urge that the procedures for access to the special Trust Fund set up by United Nations Secretary-General in 1989 should be simplified.

We reaffirm Nigeria's conviction that international law is the basis of inter-State relations; mutual respect and the desire for peace serve as the glue that bind countries, large and small, together. This is in line with the obligations assumed as a State party to the Statute of the ICJ which, inter alia, provides for the pacific settlement of international disputes. It is in this context that Nigeria received the judgement of the Court in October 2002 on the land and maritime boundary dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria.

Since that judgement was delivered, the two parties have had fruitful sessions in the Nigeria-Cameroon Mixed Commission, to implement the decision of the Court. As a consequence, considerable progress has been made on the various issues raised by the judgement. Also, the leadership of both countries has successfully turned the land and maritime boundary differences into an opportunity for expanded development and fruitful cooperation covering various areas of mutual interest.

We are resolute in our determination not to allow the vestiges of the colonial past to frustrate our efforts to build partnerships and thus make this an example of fruitful cooperation in our region and beyond. We wish to restate our country's appreciation for the helpful role of the Secretary-General in this process, and we call on the international community to demonstrate, in words and in deeds, their support for our current efforts.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our commitment to and support for the International Court of Justice, in which some of our eminent jurists have served in the past. We do so in the firm conviction that the Court constitutes a pillar of stability in the efforts to expand the frontiers of international law and enhance the principle of the pacific settlement of disputes among States.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 13. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 13?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 108

Crime prevention and criminal justice

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption on the work of its first to seventh sessions (A/58/422 and A/58/422/Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/58/422, para. 103)

The President: Members will recall that at its 28th plenary meeting on 13 October 2003, the General Assembly decided that agenda item 108 would also be considered directly in plenary meeting for the sole purpose of taking action on the draft United Nations Convention against Corruption.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General: Corruption is an insidious plague that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish.

This evil phenomenon is found in all countries — big and small, rich and poor — but it is in the developing world that its effects are most destructive. Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a Government's ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice and discouraging foreign aid and investment. Corruption is a key element in economic underperformance and a major obstacle to poverty alleviation and development.

I am therefore very happy that we now have a new instrument to address this scourge at the global level. The adoption of the United Nations Convention against Corruption will send a clear message that the international community is determined to prevent and control corruption. It will warn the corrupt that betrayal of the public trust will no longer be tolerated. And it will reaffirm the importance of core values such as honesty, respect for the rule of law, accountability and transparency in promoting development and making the world a better place for all.

The new Convention is a remarkable achievement, and it complements another landmark instrument, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which entered into force just a month ago. It is balanced, strong and pragmatic, and it offers a new framework for effective action and international cooperation.

The Convention introduces a comprehensive set of standards, measures and rules that all countries can apply in order to strengthen their legal and regulatory

regimes to fight corruption. It calls for preventive measures and the criminalization of the most prevalent forms of corruption in both public and private sectors. And it makes a major breakthrough by requiring Member States to return assets obtained through corruption to the country from which they were stolen.

These provisions — the first of their kind — introduce a new fundamental principle, as well as a framework for stronger cooperation between States to prevent and detect corruption and to return the proceeds. Corrupt officials will in future find fewer ways to hide their illicit gains. This is a particularly important issue for many developing countries where corrupt high officials have plundered the national wealth and where new Governments badly need resources to reconstruct and rehabilitate their societies.

For the United Nations, the Convention is the culmination of work that started many years ago, when the word corruption was hardly ever uttered in official circles. It took systematic efforts, first at the technical, and then gradually at the political, level to put the fight against corruption on the global agenda. Both the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development offered opportunities for Governments to express their determination to attack corruption and to make many more people aware of the devastating effect that corruption has on development.

The Convention is also the result of long and difficult negotiations. Many complex issues and many concerns from different quarters had to be addressed. It was a formidable challenge to produce, in less than two years, an instrument that reflects all those concerns. All countries had to show flexibility and make concessions. But we can be proud of the result.

Allow me to congratulate the members of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee on their hard work and leadership, and to pay a special tribute to the Committee's late Chairman, Ambassador Héctor Charry Samper of Colombia, for his wise guidance and his dedication. I am sure all here share my sorrow that he is not with us to celebrate this great success.

The adoption of the new Convention will be a remarkable achievement. But let us be clear: it is only a beginning. We must build on the momentum achieved to ensure that the Convention enters into force as soon as possible. I urge all Member States to attend the Signing Conference in Merida, Mexico, in December, and to ratify the Convention at the earliest possible date.

If fully enforced, this new instrument can make a real difference to the quality of life of millions of people around the world. And by removing one of the biggest obstacles to development it can help us achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Be assured that the United Nations Secretariat, and in particular the Office on Drugs and Crime, will do whatever it can to support the efforts of States to eliminate the scourge of corruption from the face of the Earth. It is a big challenge, but I think that, together, we can make a difference.

The President: I call on Mr. Muhyieddeen Touq, Acting Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption, to introduce the report of the Ad Hoc Committee and the draft United Nations Convention against Corruption.

Mr. Touq (Jordan), Acting Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption: It is indeed a great privilege and honour for me to be here today and to address the Assembly in my capacity as Acting Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption. I am here as the Acting Chairman because, sadly, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Héctor Charry Samper of Colombia, has prematurely passed away. The Ad Hoc Committee, its Bureau and I personally owe a great debt of gratitude to Ambassador Charry Samper, and we mourn his absence on this momentous occasion.

The momentum for a convention against corruption started building during the negotiations on another very important international legal instrument: the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which the Assembly adopted three years ago and which entered into force last month. Those negotiations produced a profound understanding among countries that the time had come to deliver to the world a broad, comprehensive and effective instrument to mark the determination of the international community to take joint action against the scourge of corruption.

The General Assembly reaffirmed those qualities in its resolution 56/260, adopted less than two years ago, by which the terms of reference for the negotiation process — the marching orders of the Ad Hoc Committee — were agreed upon. The General

Assembly decided at the same time to follow the successful experience of the negotiation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols. Therefore, it set a deadline for the completion of the negotiation of a draft Convention against Corruption and asked the Ad Hoc Committee to be inspired by the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime as well as by regional instruments that had set the stage in recent years.

The Ad Hoc Committee began its work with an informal preparatory meeting that was graciously hosted by the Government of Argentina, to whose commitment and generosity I should like to pay special tribute. In Buenos Aires in December 2001, we were pleasantly surprised: 26 countries came forward with proposals for the new Convention, making the work of the secretariat quite demanding but rendering the endeavour of the Ad Hoc Committee very rich in ideas and substance.

As the report indicates (A/58/422), the Ad Hoc Committee held seven sessions between January 2002 and October 2003. It complied fully with the mandate given to it by the Assembly and has delivered to the Assembly a new Convention that is practical, pragmatic, enforceable and comprehensive. It is also characterized by a carefully crafted equilibrium, which is designed to reflect the reality that corruption is a broad phenomenon that has many facets and that demands a multidisciplinary approach at both the national and international levels.

The Ad Hoc Committee's success in the very short time of less than two years was certainly not due to the simplicity of the task or to an absence of political differences in opinion or objectives. Our success was the product of unwavering commitment by all delegations, a highly participatory process — we had an average of more than 125 countries participating in the negotiations — and the spirit of cooperation and compromise that prevailed throughout the process. All delegations were intent on concluding a Convention that would benefit the international community and enable it to make inroads against corruption.

Compromise was not easy. All delegations had to revisit and reassess their objectives and their positions. All delegations had to give up something and to make concessions. But all delegations were adamant about one thing: while the new Convention needed to fully reflect all concerns and to make sure that it did not impinge on essential principles and values that the entire international community holds dear — such as respect for national sovereignty — it was of paramount importance to safeguard the high quality and innovative nature of the final product. In the end, it was sustained political will that animated the Ad Hoc Committee's work and forged this new instrument out of the good faith and talent of all delegations.

In that light, the Ad Hoc Committee complied with its mandate and is presenting to the Assembly today the United Nations Convention against Corruption, annexed to a draft resolution for its consideration and action. I hope that the Assembly will accept the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee and adopt the new Convention. I also hope that all States will make every effort in their power to be represented at the Signing Conference — which will take place at the highest possible level in Merida, Mexico, at the beginning of December — and sign the Convention.

Before concluding, I should like to express my sincere gratitude to all delegations that took part in the negotiations. I was particularly impressed by their knowledge, expertise and professionalism. I was especially impressed by the dedication and stamina of the delegations from the many developing and least developed countries that made valuable contributions. I owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the Bureau, some of whom are here with us today: the representatives of Austria, Hungary, Mauritius, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines and the United Kingdom, and the representative of Poland, who served as Rapporteur. Their indefatigable participation — coupled with their strong commitment and their impressive diplomatic skills — was a major reason for the Ad Hoc Committee's success. Let me also express my heartfelt thanks to the Secretary-General for the support given to our Committee by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and its able secretariat.

The Ad Hoc Committee has laid the first building block. The Assembly's action today will continue the construction of a strong system of national action and international cooperation against corruption. However, we still have a long way to go. We must make sure that the political will that made the negotiation of the Convention possible is sustained and strengthened and that it manifests itself in the expeditious ratification

and subsequent full implementation of the new Convention.

Mr. Romero (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I should like to pay tribute to the memory of Ambassador Héctor Charry Samper, who unfortunately is no longer with us. The swift entry into force of the United Nations Convention against Corruption will undoubtedly be the best way to honour appropriately the work carried out by Ambassador Charry Samper. We regret the loss that his death has meant for the Government and the people of Colombia, and we express our most heartfelt condolences to the family.

I am particularly pleased to speak on behalf of Mexico at the current General Assembly session, which has received the report of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption (A/58/422 and Add.1) in response to the desire of the highest United Nations body for an effective international legal instrument to fight corruption. The Assembly's adoption of the Convention will open up new horizons and enable us to establish mechanisms of cooperation to fight one of the problems that most afflict institutions and society in general: corruption.

It is very clear to us that corruption is a scourge that obstructs the development of nations, deepens inequality in societies and diminishes countries' competitiveness. Carrying out resolute action to fight it is a concern not only of advanced countries, but of each and every United Nations Member.

For that reason, the implementation of far-ranging public policies against corruption is today an overriding need around the world. In the struggle against this evil, we need the participation of those who govern and those who are governed and we need to join efforts at the international level. This would make it possible for us to consolidate institutions and society as a whole and to promote living together, side by side, in democracy.

In Mexico, the administration of President Vicente Fox Quesada has designed and implemented a comprehensive programme to combat corruption and to promote transparency and administrative development. The programme's objective is to transform the public administration into a modern service-oriented organization responding closely to the needs, interests and demands of society.

We have appealed for transparency in the public sector so that society can receive information that was previously kept from it. We have laid down judicial bases to professionalize public service, to give priority to the training and value of its members and to thus make it a fundamental element in the smooth functioning of the State.

The approval of laws on the transparency of and access to public and governmental information and on the career professional service are examples of the progress we have made. Similarly, we have adopted measures to promote citizen participation in the fight against corruption. We are modernizing public service through information technology and by generating assistance and cooperation among nations. For that reason, Mexico is actively participating in international organization mechanisms aimed at reaching those goals.

The adoption of the draft United Nations Convention against Corruption will be the result of the international community's conviction that the fight against corruption requires a common effort and a concerted and immediate response. The members of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption went beyond their differences and sought formulas for consensus and demonstrated firm political will, which today is bearing fruit. The text adopted reflects the concerns of all countries, and we are convinced that it will make it possible to make progress towards eradicating corruption.

The comprehensive approach to corruption, the emphasis on prevention both in the public and private sector and the measures provided for in the area of extradition and mutual legal assistance, including the handling of property and assets obtained illegally, will make the Convention an effective instrument.

My country has given special attention to the fact the General Assembly will decide to open the Convention to signing in the city of Merida, Mexico. We thank States for their support of Mexico's offer, and we would join in the appeal of Secretary-General Kofi Annan that they come to Merida, Mexico, to sign the Convention. We are convinced that the Merida conference will open new paths of understanding and will help uphold the spirit of the struggle against corruption that characterized the negotiations in Vienna. We invite all States to be represented at the

highest level at the conference, which will be held from 9 to 11 December 2003.

Simultaneously with the conference, there will be exchanges through round-table meetings in which experts will offer their opinions on how to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention. The round tables will emphasize the role of civil society and communications media in the struggle against corruption, legislative measures to achieve that goal, preventive action in the public and private sectors and measures to combat corruption in financial systems.

This afternoon in Conference Room 4 Mexico will hold an informal meeting on the Merida conference, interested delegations will be given detailed information of an organizational and logistical nature and on formal matters regarding their stay in Mexico for representatives and those accompanying them. We sincerely hope that the political will that has been a constant in this discussion will be reflected in the participation of States in the Merida conference and in the signing of the Convention. We would urge all delegations to participate and to sign this most important instrument during the conference.

Mr. Gayan (Mauritius): Allow me first to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his very inspiring address this morning on the need for the international community to deal effectively with the scourge of corruption, and also for his continued support in that regard. I would also like to express to Mr. Muhyieddeen Touq, the Acting Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption, our profound appreciation for the quality of the work he and his team have done in so short a time. They deserve our sincere gratitude.

It is with a sense of great satisfaction and pride that Mauritius expresses its support for this new draft Convention against Corruption. Mauritius has been closely associated with the preparation of this new instrument. As a member of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of the Convention and also as a Vice-Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Mauritius is delighted that the international community is being presented with an additional instrument in the overall architecture of good governance.

When the General Assembly adopted its resolution 55/61 in December 2000, recognizing that an effective international legal instrument against corruption, independent of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, was desirable, it could not have foreseen that "desirable" was a gross understatement. The fact that the draft Convention is ready for adoption only two years after work started on it is indicative of the international community's eagerness to take urgent collective measures to undo the havoc which corruption wreaks on our countries. We are happy that the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption has fulfilled its mandate with remarkable speed. The experts and all those who participated in the drafting of this comprehensive and multidisciplinary instrument deserve our congratulations and gratitude.

Article 1 of the Convention stipulates that the purposes of the Convention are: first, to promote and strengthen measures to prevent and combat corruption efficiently and effectively; secondly, to promote, facilitate and support international cooperation and technical assistance in the prevention of and fight against corruption, including in asset recovery; and third, to promote integrity, accountability and proper management of public affairs and public property.

We admire the fact that it has taken only 71 articles to deal with: prevention, investigation and prosecution of corruption; freezing, seizure, confiscation and return of the proceeds from offences established in the Convention; protection of sovereignty; public reporting to enhance transparency in public administration, particularly with regard to decision-making processes; bribery and embezzlement of property in the private sector; bank secrecy; international cooperation; extradition; mutual legal assistance; mechanisms for recovery of property through international cooperation and confiscation; and information exchange. This is drafting of an exceptional quality, which will become a model and which will be acknowledged as a work of art.

In 2000, we in Mauritius decided to modernize our legislation in order to deal more effectively with the scourge of corruption. We set up a select committee of our Parliament, which proposed a new, modern, comprehensive and results-oriented law. The Prevention of Corruption Act set up an independent anti-corruption commission with a three-fold objective: to educate and to prevent and prosecute corruption. The new commission is already operational and is gradually gaining in stature. While the Government of Mauritius is determined to wage a relentless war against

corruption, we also believe that, in the performance of its functions, the commission should respect the fundamental principles of human rights and guarantee due process and the rule of law in accordance with the principles of our domestic legislation, because we believe that failure by the institution entrusted with the prevention, investigation and prosecution of corruption to observe the principles of the rule of law would render that institution itself guilty of corruption.

Mauritius is convinced that limiting the definition of corruption to the classic offences of bribery would be unwise, especially as those who in modern times are bent on blazing new trails in corrupt practices are endowed with extraordinary ingenuity and creativity. We are happy to note that the Convention, which is couched in a language sufficient to address corruption in a meaningful manner for present purposes, will be reviewed in five years. The review process is necessary to keep pace with new trends in corruption and to improve the legal framework in the light of experience gained.

International and uniform norms of conduct for public affairs and the management of the private sector will supplement the legal arsenal we have to deal with corruption. In Mauritius, we shall review our own legislation in order to bring it in line with this Convention.

In addition to the Prevention of Corruption Act, my country has also created legislation on financial intelligence and a campaign against money-laundering. A financial intelligence unit not only oversees internal cooperation among national law enforcement agencies but also provides international cooperation and mutual legal assistance in cases of suspected money-laundering. We are proud that many aspects of our legislation are reflected in this multilateral instrument.

Mauritius, which has a thriving banking and financial services sector, is anxious to preserve its impeccable image. Mauritius maintains constant vigilance for attempts to introduce the illicit proceeds of crime into its financial circuits.

As a member of the African Union, Mauritius is extremely sensitive to the havoc which corruption has caused in many of our countries. Millions of our people are suffering today on account of corrupt practices, which have diverted scarce resources from development to bank accounts in non-African countries. Although the state in which Africa is in today cannot be attributed to any single cause, still we have no doubt that corruption was a major contributor to that state. No wonder then that corruption is viewed in Africa as our own weapon of mass destruction.

We know that business in Africa can no longer be business as usual. We have decided to take our destiny in our own hands, and we are committed to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Good governance is making significant progress all over Africa. We are committed to upholding human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the fight against corruption. We have also decided to adopt the African Peer Review Mechanism. We are determined to live up to those norms, not because they are being imposed upon us by others but because our people deserve nothing less. On 12 July 2003, the heads of State and Government of the African Union adopted the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption. There are other regional initiatives that complement the United Nations Convention. A worldwide effort to combat corruption in all its forms and aspects is in our collective interest as corruption has become transnational. The prevention and eradication of corruption is the responsibility of all States, big and small.

International cooperation is critical for a successful campaign against corruption. No country is really immune to the ravages of corrupt practices. Like the war against terrorism, this war against corruption must enjoy the widest possible international consensus. We hope that many States will attend the signing ceremony in Merida, Mexico, and we are reassured by the interest that this Convention is generating: the required number of ratifications for the Convention to enter into force will be reached in less time than our experts took to finalize the Convention. May I add that Mauritius will be an immediate signatory of the Convention.

The fight against corruption cannot be won by relying only on repressive measures. This Convention has the merit of having gone beyond what is usually contained in such multilateral instruments by offering to the international community an exhaustive range of levels of intervention to combat corruption in all its known forms.

Transparency, good governance, sound management of public affairs and respect for the rule of law are preconditions for fighting corruption.

Corruption thrives when public affairs are shrouded in secrecy. Corruption cannot coexist with transparency and good management.

Mauritius wishes to echo what is contained in the preamble to the Convention. We are concerned about the seriousness of the problems and threats posed by corruption to the stability and security of societies; undermines the institutions and values of democracy, ethical values and justice and jeopardizes sustainable development and the rule of law. We are also concerned about the links between corruption and other forms of economic crime and organized crime.

The Ad Hoc Committee was well inspired to provide for measures which States must take to address the consequences of corruption. In that context, States parties may consider corruption a relevant factor in legal proceedings to annul or rescind a contract, withdraw a concession or take any other remedial action. In our view, that is an essential element in the armoury the international community needs to effectively combat corruption. The fight against corruption concerns all of us, and we must do whatever it takes not to lose that fight.

In conclusion, I would be failing in my duty if I did not express our grief at the passing away of Mr. Hector Charry Samper of Columbia, who chaired the Ad Hoc Committee until very recently. The only comfort we have is that his name will be forever associated with this landmark Convention.

Mrs. Borzi Cornacchia (Italy): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia and the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey align themselves with this statement.

Allow me to join previous speakers in expressing on behalf of the European Union our great debt of gratitude to Ambassador Charry Samper of Colombia, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee. We deeply mourn his absence today on this special occasion.

Corruption impoverishes national economies, undermines democratic institutions and the rule of law and has a negative impact on economic and social development. For this reason the European Union attaches particular importance to preventing and combating corruption at all levels.

While the European Union continues to implement its own comprehensive anti-corruption policy, at the same time it believes that — in an increasingly connected world — the United Nations needs to take stronger action in the increasingly urgent fight against corruption. In this context, the European Union wholeheartedly looks forward to the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, an instrument that can effectively contribute to our common aim.

The European Union expresses its satisfaction on the outcome of the negotiations on this Convention, held in Vienna, in which the Union played an active role. The text to be adopted today provides States with an instrument of high standard and with a wide range of universally acceptable provisions that will strengthen States' ability to combat corruption at the national and international levels. The European Union also applauds the comprehensive nature of the Convention, which includes both prevention and law enforcement measures, as well as innovative legal provisions or the transfer of funds of illicit origin and their restitution.

The European Union reiterates its high appreciation for the offer made by the Government of Mexico to host a high-level political conference for the purpose of signing the convention in Merida from 9 to 11 December and sincerely hopes the maximum number of States will sign the convention on that occasion. Such a response would be an important first step towards the speedy entry into force and implementation of the Convention, to which the European Union is committed.

The European Union also believes that adequate support for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on Vienna is needed, including for its Global Programme against Corruption, so as to enable it to promote the entry into force of the Convention against Corruption and to support the implementation of related activities and initiatives.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda, on behalf of the African Union.

Mr. Kamanzi (Rwanda) (*spoke in French*): I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate to both you, Mr. President, and to your Office, our profound congratulations for the excellent way in which you

continue to guide the work of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

I would also like to express the great appreciation of the African Group for having included on the agenda the item on crime prevention and criminal justice.

The Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption has just presented its report to the General Assembly. Its goal was to produce an effective international juridical tool to combat corruption, and I should like to express my sincere congratulations to the Committee for the excellent work it has done, which is an ample reflection of the outstanding capacity of its members.

Like previous speakers, I would also like to pay tribute to the late Ambassador Héctor Charry Samper for his commendable work in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee. May he rest in peace.

The proposed convention gives Member States a way to overcome the major political and legal obstacles that have frequently hampered development efforts in various countries, particularly the poorest ones. It will also help to counter the danger of the proliferation of armed conflicts that affect the poorest countries — conflicts often underpinned by multinational structures operating through political regimes controlled by a nucleus of corrupt leaders. In this regard, the instrument the General Assembly now has before it is a real shot in the arm for the efforts to institutionalize the rule of law and good governance initiated by a number of African States, which are determined now more than ever to assure a better socio-economic future for their citizens.

I hardly need to dwell on the importance of this mechanism for the international community in its efforts to combat terrorism, which is often strengthened by the existence of networks forged with the aid of commercial and political systems maintained by illegal funds.

To have an effective mechanism is one thing, but to use it is another. So I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to the international community to provide their unreserved support for this draft convention. From the time of its conception, through its preparation, the proposal has now reached the stage where each country has to commit to making this proposed mechanism its own by adopting it.

In this connection I would like to encourage all nations of the world to make an overwhelming show of acceptance for the invitation to the Merida, Mexico signing conference, from 9 to 11 December, to mark the formal adoption of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. This will be one more opportunity for the nations of the world, both rich and poor, to voice their firm support for justice, peace and the prosperity of humankind.

Mr. Negroponte (United States of America): Ten years ago, bribes were still tax deductible in some countries and no international anti-corruption treaties existed. Today's resolution is therefore a milestone achievement in the global effort to ensure transparency, fairness and justice in public affairs.

This is vital not only to the rule of law, but to the fundamental confidence citizens must have for representative government and private enterprise to succeed. Corruption and democracy are incompatible; corruption and economic prosperity are incompatible; and corruption and equal opportunity are incompatible.

As a consequence, I am pleased to say that the draft convention we consider for adoption represents the first globally negotiated anti-corruption treaty and will likely be the first anti-corruption treaty applied on a truly global level. It is more comprehensive than any existing anti-corruption treaty and provides the first agreed multilateral framework for Governments to cooperate in the recovery of illicitly obtained assets. An important chapter of the text creates a conference of States parties that will be responsible for follow-up. We expect that body to play a prominent role in promoting implementation, and we believe it is not too soon for us informally to share our visions of how it can be most effective.

Like other anti-crime treaties before it, the new Convention will establish commitments to criminalize certain undesirable and harmful conduct — in this case, corrupt actions such as bribery, embezzlement and money-laundering. But the Convention does not stop there. It will also require Governments to take action in a number of areas — for example in public procurement, public financial management and the regulation of public officials — so as to help prevent corruption from happening in the first place.

The international fight against corruption has long been a priority for my country, beginning with our efforts in the 1980s to rally international attention to

bribery in international business transactions. In fact, President Bush considers anti-corruption efforts to be so central to development that he has made progress on fighting corruption an essential element for participation in the Millennium Challenge Account, which we expect will add $5 billion to our core development assistance and thereby increase it 50 per cent by fiscal year 2006.

Experts from approximately 130 countries spent countless hours over the past two years developing this Convention. The United States was pleased to participate actively in those long and highly technical negotiations. Our experience convinces us that the draft United Nations Convention against Corruption is the product of a true partnership among most of the countries represented in this Hall. We think this is crucial. A successful fight against corruption requires action on many fronts; clearly, our efforts will be effective only to the extent that we maintain the partnership we have forged over the last two years.

Now — as with all treaties — the end of negotiations marks the real beginning of engagement. The words of this Convention must be translated into action, or else the hard work of the Ad Hoc Committee will be for naught. Numerous compromises had to be made in the negotiations; no country obtained everything it sought. But with an agreed text before us, the time has come for all countries to move as quickly as possible in their national processes to consider signature and ratification, to engage civil society and the private sector and to work to promote the implementation of the innovative and helpful approaches that we have developed together.

In closing, we thank the members of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee and its secretariat from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna, in particular Eduardo Vetere and his staff, including Dimitri Vlassis, for their tireless dedication during the two years of negotiations.

Our Acting Chairman, Ambassador Muhyieddeen Touk of Jordan, deserves special credit for his wise leadership following the sad and untimely death of Ambassador Charry Samper of Colombia. We also want to recognize the contributions of the late Ambassador Samper, who believed wholeheartedly in our efforts and, we believe, would be pleased with the finishing touches to his work.

Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to take the floor, and congratulations to our colleagues who participated in the important work of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Mr. Garcia (Philippines): First of all, I would like to express my satisfaction at being able to attend this particular meeting of the General Assembly to deliberate on the adoption of the draft United Nations Convention against Corruption.

It is widely recognized that corruption is a universal phenomenon and that it knows no boundaries. No country is immune to its pernicious effects. Indeed, all societies and economies are affected by that transnational phenomenon. The International Monetary Fund has estimated that the total amount of money laundered on an annual basis is equivalent to 3 per cent to 5 per cent of the world's gross domestic product. A significant portion of that activity involves funds derived from corruption.

It is precisely for that reason that the draft United Nations Convention against Corruption should be hailed as a landmark achievement by the international community. For the first time, the scourge of corruption is being addressed in a comprehensive and multidisciplinary manner. For the first time, the members of the international community have broken new ground and have been able to forge a consensus on measures to prevent and combat corruption more efficiently and effectively, as well as on measures to promote, facilitate and strengthen international cooperation and technical assistance in the prevention of and the fight against corruption, including in asset recovery. These are complex issues requiring cooperation, flexibility and creativity.

We do not need to be reminded of the fact that the Philippines is among those countries which in the past have been damaged by high-level corruption committed with impunity by high-level officials and their high-powered cohorts and cronies in the private sector. The Filipino people are still paying for the sins of those to whom they had entrusted their fate — those who had sworn to uphold and protect their interests. Since President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assumed leadership in 2001, significant accomplishments have been made in the fight against corruption in my country, the Philippines. Despite these gains, the Philippines realizes that international cooperation and technical assistance are vital elements in the campaign

against corruption, especially as regards funds that have been illicitly transferred, hidden or invested in other countries beyond the jurisdiction of our legal system.

Viewed against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the Philippines welcomed from the outset the negotiations on the draft United Nations Convention against Corruption. The Philippines was actively engaged in this multilateral process from the very beginning and was elected a Vice-Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption. The Philippines had even submitted its own draft of the convention during the preparatory meeting held in Buenos Aires in December 2001.

This involvement was capped by close Philippine participation in the sixth and seventh sessions of the Ad Hoc Committee, held in Vienna in July/August and September/October this year. During these sessions we were able to put to good use the hard and painful lessons of the Presidential Commission on Good Government, the Philippine Government agency tasked with the recovery of the illicitly acquired assets of the Marcos regime. I specifically refer to the landmark chapter V of the draft Convention where, for the first time, the return of assets is stated as a fundamental principle, and international parameters are set relative to asset recovery.

Having said that, the Philippines is well aware that major compromises had to be made by all delegations to successfully secure final agreement on the draft Convention. The Philippine delegation was among those that had to strike a compromise for the sake of reaching consensus on the language of provisions that, for us, touched on dearly held positions and convictions. This we did, knowing that the Filipino people would be better served by the existence, rather than the absence, of an international legal instrument against corruption.

Nevertheless, the proceedings of the negotiations, the notes in the travaux preparatoires and the report of the consistency group make very clear the spirit and intent behind these textual accommodations. Likewise, the statements of the Group of 77 and China during the Ad Hoc Committee sessions elaborate on the raison d'être of the Convention for the developing countries.

The Philippines wholeheartedly supports the adoption of the Convention by the General Assembly. In our view, the Convention should ultimately serve as a catalyst for the rule of law, the exchange of best practices, technical assistance and capacity-building, particularly to strengthen the efforts of developing countries in fighting corruption. It would, however, be an aberration, a distortion of all that the United Nations stands for, if the Convention were to be used as an instrument to impose conditionalities, or if it were cited as a convenient excuse to intrude into the internal affairs of individual States.

In closing, I would like to express my appreciation to all those delegations who participated actively in the Vienna negotiations, including the secretariat of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime under the leadership of the Executive Director, Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, and members of the United Nations Secretariat. I would also like to mention, in particular, Mr. Eduardo Vetere and Mr. Dimitri Vlassis.

The Ad Hoc Committee has complied with and fulfilled its difficult mandate and is now presenting to us the formidable product of its heroic and creative efforts. This deserves our heartfelt thanks. We are hopeful that the same heroism and creativity will prevail with respect to the future entry into force of the Convention.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. Because I promised many delegations that I would present this morning my analysis on the debate on the cluster of items on revitalization, restructuring and reform, we will continue the debate on agenda item 108 this afternoon.

Agenda item 55 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Agenda item 57 (*continued*)

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Agenda item 58 (*continued*)

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/786; A/58/175, A/58/351, A/58/382, A/58/395 and A/58/395/Corr.1)

Agenda item 59 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

The President: Sixty-one delegations have spoken in the debate under item 55, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", item 57, "United Nations reform: measures and proposals", agenda item 58, "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields" and agenda item 59, "Strengthening of the United Nations system".

I believe it important to note at the outset that delegations speaking under this cluster of items centred their statements on agenda items 55 and 58. Little or no reference was made to items 57 and 59. This is, I believe, an indication of where some of our problems lie, in respect of reform and revitalization of the General Assembly and of the United Nations as a whole. We should, in our deliberations, ponder why we have two items before us for discussion on which few delegations cared to comment.

The discussions on items 55 and 58 have been both interesting and thought provoking. Delegations have been particularly reflective and conscientious in their approach to agenda item 55, on the revitalization of the General Assembly. It is on this item that I will focus my assessment today. I am both pleased and encouraged by the overall mood of the debate, and particularly by the many concrete proposals and suggestions that delegations have made.

I sense a gathering momentum in favour of taking decisive steps towards revitalization of the Assembly. I also sense an emerging consensus that we should take action expeditiously. I see no reason for further delay. The informal note I circulated to delegations on 15 October 2003 has been well received. I appreciate your support for this document as a worthwhile initiative and the generally held view that it forms a good basis on which to begin our work. I was especially pleased that the two clusters of issues I identified in the informal note have been generally welcomed as a useful conceptual framework.

Among the specific issues addressed in the debate, it is noteworthy that a number appeared to give rise to particular concerns and were based centrally on decisions that must be taken in the context of the revitalization exercise. The first, and all-encompassing, is the political position and status of the General Assembly. In that regard, attention was repeatedly drawn to the passage in the Millennium Declaration in which heads of State and Government resolved

> "To reaffirm the central position of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations, and to enable it to play that role effectively." (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*)

That objective, I believe, should form the backdrop for our negotiations in the weeks ahead.

The view has also been taken that the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council needs to be addressed. In that context, consideration by the Council of issues that seem to fall more naturally within the purview of the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council is a development to which further attention must be paid in our discussions.

The view has been strongly advanced in the course of the debate that for the General Assembly's resolutions and decisions to be better respected, they will have to become better known. Attention was drawn to the advocacy role that the Department of Public Information should more actively play in bringing that about.

In the consideration of possible means of strengthening the General Assembly, many references were made to the need to strengthen the Office of the President, both as a means of better managing each session and as a way to ensure needed continuity and institutional memory from session to session. Such strengthening would require augmenting the resources available to the Office. There is also an emerging view that the role of the presidency itself needs to be reviewed. Comments were made in that regard on the possibilities of extending the term of the President, re-electing the President to a second term or instituting a troika system. Each of those issues might be further considered.

The idea of making more effective use of the General Committee as an organizational and coordinating mechanism has been generally welcomed. The initial informal steps I have taken in that respect might now be fleshed out and formalized.

The implementation of resolutions of the Assembly was a crucial concern raised in the debate. Comments were made concerning the many resolutions that went unimplemented or were poorly followed up.

That is indeed a significant deficit in our activities to which greater attention must be paid. Suggestions have been made for better monitoring of the process of implementation that should be examined in detail. A vital part of ensuring more effective implementation must lie in drafting better resolution texts that would make resolutions more user-friendly, and thus more implementable. There appears to be general agreement that resolutions should be shorter and more to the point and, to the extent possible, should refrain from the excessive repetition of previous resolutions. I trust that the comprehensive resolution that I anticipate will be the result of the negotiations that will now commence on the revitalization item will itself be a model of what resolutions of the future might look like.

Views have begun to converge on some points regarding the nature and function of the plenary itself. The rationale for compressing the plenary's work into a three-month period, whatever it may have been once, some time ago, no longer appears to be persuasive. An alternative should be sought to that practice that has the Assembly considering, over a period of approximately 13 weeks, some 200 draft resolutions. As the Assembly session is for one year, scheduling the work of the Assembly over a longer period seems desirable.

Notable interest was shown in positioning the plenary to approach its work more thematically. That is an issue that should now receive further consideration, both in relation to the organization of the general debate and the organization of the agenda of the General Assembly. A consensus has begun to develop around the importance of reducing the length of the Assembly's agenda. Delegations have acknowledged that the substantive agenda as currently presented creates a workload that is difficult to contend with. At the same time, the increasing awareness that the agenda should reflect contemporary realities was evident from the debate, and is a matter that should require attention in our revitalization discussion.

Progress has been made in the biennialization, triennialization and clustering of items for discussion on the Assembly's agenda, and that has been widely recognized. The general view appears to be that the time has come to make further progress on those fronts as we proceed with the revitalization exercise.

The issue of documentation overload is one that is inextricably linked to matters concerning the agenda, resolutions and the biennialization and triennialization and clustering of items. It would be essential to take up that matter in that broader context.

Comments have been made concerning aspects of the revitalization exercise that concern the Main Committees and their bureaux. Some of the Committees are themselves reviewing their working methods and procedures to improve effectiveness. Those initiatives will need to be integrated into the overall revitalization exercise.

I hope that my assessment of the revitalization debate will assist Members as we move ahead in our work.

With regard to the next steps, I wish to advise the Assembly that I have invited six permanent representatives to serve as facilitators for this item. I appreciate, and I am pleased, that they have agreed to do so. The facilitators are Mr. Abdallah Baali, Permanent Representative of Algeria; Mr. Stafford O. Neil, Permanent Representative of Jamaica; Mr. Dirk Jan van den Berg, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands; Mr. Kishore Mahbubani, Permanent Representative of Singapore; Mr. Roman Kirn, Permanent Representative of Slovenia; and Mr. Dumisani Shadrack Kumalo, Permanent Representative of South Africa. I shall be meeting the facilitators as a group shortly — in fact, no later than Monday afternoon — so that we can determine a framework and timeframe for their work.

It is my intention to present a draft resolution of the President for consideration by the Assembly before it concludes the substantive part of its session, in December of this year. I know that I can count on members to give the facilitators the necessary support and cooperation so that we can meet that goal. I look forward to working with the Assembly and to benefiting from its continued support as we pursue together the critical questions that have been identified by our heads of State and Government and other high-level representatives as matters of priority for the General Assembly.

We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda items 55, 57, 58 and 59.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.